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MY MIS-SPENT YOUTH

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MY MIS-SPENT YOUTH

A NAVAL JOURNAL

BY

HENRY FITCH

Α.Π.Θ.

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Ι. ΜΕΓΑΣ
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TO

CRAIGIE

AND THE FOUR OF THEM

VIRGINIA

JAMIE

CATRIONA

AND

ELIZABETH

Desire and curiosity are the two eyes through which a man sees the world in the most enchanted colours; it is they that make women beautiful or fossils interesting; and the man may squander his estate and come to beggary, but if he keeps these two amulets he is still rich in the possibilities of pleasure.

R. L. S.

FOREWORD

THIS book is a labour of love and was written during a holiday in May 1936. Many people have said to me, "Why don't you write it all down?" I have done so. And here it is.

The narrative is taken from scrapbooks, signal logs, and diaries made shortly after each event. If the reading of it should encourage any youth to choose that finest of all services—the Royal Navy—for a profession, then my labour is justified.

H. M. F.

NORTHFIELD,
PRESTBURY

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CHAPTER I

HOW I GOT MY UNIFORM

It was a fine sunny morning in the late summer of 1909. I was lying in bed in what was known as the night nursery of our country home down in Essex. Breakfast in bed had been ordained by my mother, who thought that I was looking a little run down; and when mother did find time to study the health of any member of her large family—I was one of thirteen—she was usually not far out in her diagnosis and cure. So I was lying there enjoying this unaccustomed luxury when a sister dashed in with the morning's letters. Some excitement had been caused by the fact that there were three very official-looking ones for me. The truth was that I had sat the examination for Assistant Clerkships in the Royal Navy a few weeks earlier, but I was absolutely convinced that I had failed and had then written to find out particulars of entry into the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Indian Marine. These were the replies —as I hastily explained to my sister—and I begged her for a chance to study them in peace.

It seemed to me that the Indian Marine would suit me well; I was not quite so sure about the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Half an hour later I looked again at that third letter —a blue one from the Admiralty. I was quite sure it

was only a formal notice of my failure. I had salved my conscience about that long ago; even with the help of some excellent coaching from my eldest brother—himself a Naval Instructor—how could I, with a Secondary School education, hope to compete with the output from the Public Schools and crammers of the whole country! I tore it open and found no letter inside but merely a long list of those who had sat the examination, the subjects they had taken, the marks scored and the final placings. I started at the bottom of that list—it seemed safer so—and worked backwards. I have the list still. It is a long one and my name is at No. 13. There was a note to the effect that, provided we could pass the medical examination to be held later, the first twenty would be taken.

The medical examination, which came a few weeks later, was also touch and go. I had been captain of the football and cricket at school, and *victor ludorum* in my last year, but I had a muscle missing in my right shoulder and I knew it. It probably accounts for the fact that I am left-handed at all games except hockey, which of course one has to play right-handed, and at that I am best with the crook of the stick. There were three doctors to examine us, and they were so pleasant and easy-going, and I was so obviously fighting fit, that I thought I had got that shoulder through unnoticed. But not quite. One wily fellow had seen something and he told me to climb the rope to the roof. I did that all right. "Now," he said, "support your weight with your left arm." I did that easily. "And now," with a crafty smile, "with your right." I managed that as well;

I had been practising it for weeks. I liked the friendly look he gave me when I came down, and I am quite sure he did not tell the other doctors that I had no pectoralis major on the right side.

A few days later official confirmation came through that I was accepted as one of the most junior officers of His Majesty's Navy. The joy at home was great; my personal pride immense. But none was more pleased than the Head of the local Secondary School, the brother who had coached me, and the P.T.I. who had looked to the preparation of that "strong" right arm.

There followed busy days getting together my regulation kit and uniform. Gieve's, the naval outfitters, supplied most of this; but money was short and some of the most expensive items were purchased second-hand. I was photographed in uniform, of course, and I was dissatisfied with the result; I did not look quite so imposing as I felt I should have done.

There followed some weary weeks of waiting and then my first Letter of Appointment arrived—to H.M.S. *Actaeon* at Sheerness. I was nearly eighteen, approaching 6 feet in height and 12 stone in weight, and I was leaving home for the first time. The country bumpkin going to sea to seek his fortune! I refused to let my mother see me off at the station. I explained carefully that I wished to carry away with me a picture of her standing in the porch of our old home, smiling and waving—but not weeping—and I think she understood. She had six other sons and I could well be spared.

CHAPTER II

AND ITS FATE

I WAS to join H.M.S. *Actaeon* as an Assistant Clerk,[1] and on the way down I was to report at the Royal Naval Barracks at Chatham. I arrived at the barracks—an enormous building in the dockyard—late on the evening of 28th October, and was disconcerted to find that no one seemed to know anything about me or even to care what happened to me. Obviously I was too unimportant to bother about, and I was terribly shy and self-conscious. However, I was finally given a spare cabin to myself and turned in, lonely, cold and dispirited. I feel there should be some form of "host" in such places whose business it would be to look after lost sheep like myself. Next morning I slept late—so late that I dared not look for breakfast—and as I had not been shown the position of the bathroom I had to get into full uniform before searching for a wash and shave. By noon I was sharp-set, and immediately the lunch bell rang I made a dash for the officers' mess. I still have a vivid remembrance of the impressive appearance of this huge panelled room, with long tables down the centre and a large round one at the end, with marine servants wearing white gloves standing at intervals round the sides. The long tables were filling up when I

[1] Now Paymaster-Cadet.

entered, but the large round one remained empty. I knew no one and I was shy; I did not wish to inflict my company on anyone, so I sat down alone at the round table. A marine servant, with a queer look on his face, stepped forward to serve me. Then to my horror the table began slowly to fill up—first with a sprinkling of Captains, then the Commodore and, finally, a Rear-Admiral. I sat and sweated and inwardly bitterly cursed that marine servant who had allowed me to go to my doom unwarned. That doom finally arrived when a large and imposing Captain of a battleship stood behind my chair and said, "Young man, you have taken my seat; don't let it occur again".

That afternoon another of my entry reported at the barracks and next morning the two of us joined the *Actaeon* at Sheerness. The *Actaeon* was a Torpedo Depot ship—one of the converted "wooden walls"—chiefly concerned with stores and repairs for torpedo boats and an occasional submarine. We were there for training: the unit was a small one, and once we had settled down I spent a happy month learning the rudiments of naval finance, victualling, stores, naval law and court-martial procedure. All spare time from other duties was spent reading, and making notes of, the King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, an omnibus volume, with an Addendum almost as large as itself, containing all rules and regulations for the correct running of His Majesty's Navy. The Fleet Paymaster responsible for our training gave me one piece of advice which I have never forgotten: that it is more useful to know where to find a regulation than to know

the wording of that regulation off by heart. In later years I found that it was indeed so.

In November, bursting with knowledge of naval affairs and my self-esteem recovered, I was appointed to H.M.S. *Drake*, flagship of the Fifth Cruiser Squadron, Atlantic Fleet. That sounded more like really going to sea and I collected my gear with a light heart. In those days junior officers always travelled in uniform, and *en route* for Plymouth I had to change at Newton Abbott, where a dear old lady mistook me for a porter. She asked me what time the next train left for Totnes, and I did not know. She then asked from which platform, and again I confessed ignorance. "The trouble with you young men," she said, "is that you don't know anything these days. Take my bags across to the waiting-room and be quick about it." I did so and received twopence for my pains, and she is still in ignorance of the great variety of information I *could* have imparted outside the duties of a railway porter.

On reporting at Devonport Naval Barracks I found that the *Drake* had passed on to Portsmouth, her home port, and about 6 P.M. the next evening I joined her there. I had come off in a picket boat with my gear, saluted the quarterdeck, reported to the officer of the watch and the Commander, and all had gone well—but then I struck a snag. As I pulled back the gunroom curtains and entered the mess a Sub-Lieutenant looked up and caught my eye.

"Good God!" he exclaimed.

"I've come to join," said I, trying to be friendly.

"The devil you have," said he. "You're bloody ugly and I'm going to beat you for it."

"I'd like to see you do it."

My looks had never been objected to so violently before, and anyway I was bigger than this fellow and could fight a bit.

"Dogs of War," he roared, "put him across the table."

The Dogs of War did it. There were eighteen of them, and as I was in the doorway the scrap lasted quite a long time. My beautiful new uniform suffered badly. Most of its buttons were wrenched clean out of their sockets—with pieces of cloth attached—my collar was torn off, my cap trampled underfoot. Finally someone got hold of the end of my tie and drew the slip-knot tight. That finished me. I was laid across the table and received twelve of the best.

That evening I got my second dozen. After dinner the Sub. told me to sing a song. I said I hadn't a voice but he said I'd better try. I chose "Clementine" and the Assistant Paymaster vamped the accompaniment on the piano. I sang out of tune—I think he was right this time—and I took that second dozen without a struggle. One learns wisdom, and the Dogs of War looked hungry. In all I had forty-eight dozen before I had been a year at sea and became immune. For years I kept the fragments of two ash-sticks and a cherry-wood which were broken over my hind quarters; there would have been more had not the Sub. imported a dried bull's pizzle—and that was unbreakable. Also it hurt more than a stick.

While on this subject of beating, which has almost

ceased to exist, I would like to put on record—as one of the sufferers—that I think a certain amount was good for us. Going straight from school into the Navy one is apt to have an exaggerated idea of one's own importance. The beatings restored the balance. The trouble in the *Drake* was that beating was overdone. We had four Sub-Lieutenants in the gunroom and only the senior one on board could beat. This meant that the second had to seize his opportunities when the senior was ashore, the third when the first two were out of the ship, whilst the fourth hardly had a look in at all. Our Second Sub. was a brutal beater and his occasions were not well chosen. A year or two ago I met him at a big civilian function—I a civilian, he a post-Captain. "Who are you?" he said. "I know your face but can't put a ticket on it." "Last time we met," I replied, "you gave me a dozen and I've a good mind to give *you* a dozen now." Then we laughed and shook hands.

One of the midshipmen made a sad mistake. He kept a list of his beatings and the reasons for them. When I left the ship he held the record with fifty dozen against my forty-eight. I was rather jealous of him. We had been great pals—in adversity—and whether it was due to loneliness after my departure I do not know, but he sent that list to his father, who was a parson. The parson forwarded it to the Admiralty. An enquiry was held. I was thankful I was not there to give evidence, but I was told the upshot was as follows: certain disciplinary action was taken against the Subs.; the midshipman was sent back to the ship, but his brother

snotties would have none of him. He was not allowed into the mess; he had all his meals on his sea chest in the half-deck gangway; and each night he was cut down out of his hammock. This went on for a fortnight, after which he was withdrawn from the Navy and sent to a university, where he subsequently made a great name at cricket.

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CHAPTER III

SERVICE IN A CRUISER FLAGSHIP, 1910

It is the custom in the Service to give the newly joined officer twenty-four hours in which to "sling his hammock"—in other words, to settle down in his new quarters, find his way round the ship, and generally to get some idea of the nature of his duties. In my case, as I was "additional" and not relieving someone else, I had little to take over. Sore from my beatings and distressed at the damage to my best uniform, I slung my own hammock—one of several rows on the half-deck—and turned in about 10 P.M. I found it difficult to get to sleep owing to the fact that I appeared to have been given a spot right over a regular right-of-way across the half-deck, and officers and men, walking below in a crouched position, lifted their heads and shoulders too soon and bumped me hard underneath. About midnight I must have fallen into a doze, as I woke up to find myself hitting the deck and my bedclothes cascading on top of me. Someone—probably one of the midshipmen—had drawn a knife across my foot lashings and cut me down and, as I did not know the drill and could not repair the rope, I had to sleep the rest of the night on the deck. The only objection to this was that I had to turn out with the hands at 5.30 A.M. instead of sleeping on till the rest of the junior

officers had to fall in for physical drill or signal instruction at 6.15 A.M. I had half expected something of the sort on my first night, but it became more serious when it went on for a week, and very serious when I was cut down—possibly by mistake—by the head. I fell the four or five feet on to the back of my neck and was temporarily knocked out. The sentry found me and reported the matter to the Fleet Surgeon, and there was no more trouble after that.

My duties were in the ship's office, where I worked with a Chief Writer under an Assistant Paymaster, chiefly on pay and victualling accounts, and where I remained until I left the ship a year later. We had a crew of over 900 to deal with and I found the work somewhat monotonous, but I was told that if I worked well and showed initiative I should be in the running for the position of Captain's Clerk—corresponding to the Army Adjutant—a much more attractive prospect. In due course I got that job.

Christmas Day 1909 was my first Christmas on board ship and I enjoyed it immensely. The sailors take Christmas very seriously. Every mess throughout the ship is beautifully decorated and, such is the spirit of rivalry between seamen, stokers and marines, some truly wonderful results are achieved. About 11.30 the Admiral and Captain, followed by the wardroom, gunroom and warrant officers, visited every mess in turn, and there we exchanged greetings and sampled whatever sweetmeats and delicacies were offered. The men were very pressing with their hospitality and we junior officers had more rich fare than was good for us. On completion

of the round the wardroom, gunroom and warrant officers exchanged visits with each other and then liquid refreshment was the rule. We were glad to sleep off the effects during the afternoon. On 31st December at midnight, as the youngest officer on board, I rang in the New Year on the historic ship's bell. We were lying in Dover harbour in a thick fog at the time.

A few days later I turned out late for physical drill and was reported to the Commander. He said he would not report me to the Sub., as I should be beaten, but I could go to the masthead for half an hour. It was my first experience of that lofty perch, and not a pleasant one. Also, the beating came just the same. That night after dinner the Sub. stuck a fork in the beam (which means that all juniors must get out of the mess at once) and we did not see him do it; so he beat the lot of us.

Next morning early we anchored off The Nab at Spithead and were told we could go on leave. Great joy in the gunroom. I caught the first available train and reached home late that night. There I had seven glorious days—chiefly snipe and rabbit shooting—and returned on board to find myself alone in the gunroom mess. It struck me as rather hard that the midshipmen should get both watches of leave and I only one, but when I realised the state of my exchequer I was rather glad of it. I was stony broke. Next night one of the wardroom officers had pity on me and took me ashore to see *The Dollar Princess*, which I enjoyed immensely.

On Saturday, 29th January, we sailed from Spithead for Gibraltar. It is chiefly marked in my mind as being my first Saturday night at sea. At dinner the toast is

drunk to "Sweethearts and wives—may they never meet", and the youngest present replies for the ladies. I made a sad mess of it. After dinner the Senior Sub. exercised us. He was anxious to build up a gun's crew with which to challenge the other ships in the squadron. Each crew consisted of eight: six loaders, a projectile and a charge. The gun was the long table down the centre of the mess. At the word "load" an imitation breech was opened, the projectile seized by the loaders and hurled face downwards along the deck under the table, *i.e.* into the gun. The charge followed, and if the projectile was a "young gentleman" in the best sense of the term, he removed his feet from possible contact with the charge's head. Then the breech was closed, and at the word "fire" the projectile dashed out of the end of the gun and through the curtain at the end of the mess. Six rounds were fired in about thirty seconds. The chief thing for the projectile to remember was to keep himself absolutely stiff, with arms at his sides, so that he could be propelled far into the gun. He could then shoot out more quickly at the far end at the command "fire". I know, because I was a projectile.

Four days later, after a calm voyage, we entered the Straits of Gibraltar at 5 A.M. and I turned out to get my first sight of the famous Rock. I do not think I am particularly emotional, but that first view thrilled me right through. It looked so enormous and massive—a great silent symbol of strength and Empire, and all that that word stands for. Whenever I have seen Gibraltar —and the sight has never palled—I have felt intensely proud of being British.

We moored in the harbour at 10 A.M. and, after clearing up in the office, I went ashore with one of the midshipmen to have a look round. It was on that occasion that I heard the famous story about Lord Charles Beresford. When the Fleet goes into harbour at Gib. it is the custom for the flagship to pass messages to the Army Signal Station, who distribute them to their destinations. Lord Charles was in command of the Atlantic Fleet. Several messages had been passed, such as "Send collier alongside *Queen*", "Send beef-boat alongside *Formidable*", after which the more personal ones came, one of which was "Admiral requires washerwoman at once". The Army replied, "Your message not understood", and this was reported by the Chief Yeoman of Signals to Beresford. "What message did you make?" asked Beresford. "Admiral requires washerwoman at once, sir," replied the Chief Yeoman. "Why can't the damned fools of soldiers understand that? Ask them what message they received." The Army replied that the message received was "Admiral requires woman at once". To which the Admiral immediately replied, "Please insert washer between Admiral and woman".

In later years Admiral Troubridge told me two other stories about Lord Charles Beresford. As a Captain, Beresford had been in charge of the naval brigade during the River War which led up to the battle of Omdurman. Some years later he was telling the story to a dinner-party of other captains and brought out his white helmet to show them how he had been dressed on shore service. Troubridge suggested it would make a better story if he pushed a red-hot poker through the

helmet and pretended it was a Dervish bullet. It was done at once. A few years later Troubridge was dining alone with Beresford—now an Admiral. Beresford told the story of his River War again and said he had a very narrow escape from death. Troubridge laughed, and Beresford, to prove his story, brought out the helmet. "But really, sir," said Troubridge, "I helped you to make that hole." Beresford was furiously angry and would not have it so. During the intervening years he had made himself sincerely believe that a Dervish really had fired at him at point-blank range, holed his helmet and singed his hair.

The other story has to do with the original Mediterranean Sailing Cup, said to be worth 200 guineas. Beresford had won it as a Captain with his own galley and proudly displayed it on his cabin table. One day at sea he came down from the bridge in a black mood and thought the flowers in the cup were not as fresh as they should be. He told his steward to throw them overboard. The steward went out on the stern walk with the flowers in one hand and the cup in the other, and returned a few moments later. The Admiral glanced up sharply and demanded, "Where's the cup?" The man, startled, glanced at his hands and, with a sudden chill of horror, realised that in a moment of mental aberration he had thrown the cup, not the flowers, overboard! The sea was too deep for divers, and the finest challenge cup in the Navy was lost for ever.

We spent almost two months at Gibraltar, with routine work in the office on board and hockey and football matches in the dockyard ashore. But more

important for me, as consolidating my position in the gunroom, was an outstanding success I had when going through the musketry course on the North Front rifle range. We gunroom officers paraded in service kit with rifles every morning and marched out to the range, in charge of a Lieutenant and a warrant officer, and back in the early afternoon. The course lasted five days. About 40 officers and 900 men went through. I finished up ninth in the whole ship and the only officer to be a first-class marksman. Had I not been an officer I should have drawn about £11 in prize money, a windfall I could ill afford to forgo. I might have done even better had it not been for some discomfort in the grand attack. We were doubling in from 1000 to 100 yards and shooting at disappearing targets, and I found that our smallest midshipman had not been able to keep up and was firing over my head each time I dropped. The whine of his bullets gave me goose-flesh, and he was not a crack shot.

At hockey I started in goal, as behoved the "junior wart", and graduated through the positions of left-back, outside-left, inside-right and centre-forward, till I found my rightful post at centre-half—and there I stayed. Two hockey matches in one day, one before breakfast and the other after tea, were nothing unusual and our general fitness was immense.

One night the Senior Sub. went over to Algeciras and won £100 at roulette. A fever of lust swept through the mess. Three of us raised £5 between us which we changed into pesetas—bought our return tickets—had a modest dinner at the "Reina Christina"—divided the

rest into three equal portions and sat down to gamble. We each had our own particular system. Mine worked well at first and I was quite a heavy winner half-way through the evening. I looked round to find the other two standing behind my chair—broke. We divided again and I soon lost my share. I found one of the others winning and we had another share out. We lost our last peseta just before our boat was due to leave Algeciras for Gibraltar, but we had our return tickets and all was well.

During our stay we went into dry-dock to have the barnacles and weed scraped off our bottom, a necessary preliminary to a full-speed trial later on. Some excitement was caused when the dock was pumped out and an octopus was discovered left stranded in the bottom. It was a pretty large one and not a pleasant sight. Such things made for nervousness when one went bathing at Rosia Bay.

One Sunday four of us walked to the Queen of Spain's Chair, a romantic spot which I had been wanting to visit ever since we arrived. The story I had heard was connected with the siege of the Rock just after its first capture by the British. Things had become pretty grim and the Spanish General planned a last grand assault which he assured the Queen must be successful. She ordered her attendants to carry her up to the top of a hill, just beyond La Linea, and vowed she would not leave the position till Gibraltar was taken. She is reported to have stayed there several days and was carried down, a broken-hearted woman. Such stories had a real emotional appeal to me at the age of eighteen.

On another Sunday, three weeks later, we went to see a bull-fight at La Linea. Four bulls were killed, but to our joy all the matadors were tossed, and we were not very impressed with the show—either as a trial of skill or a spectacle. We were told that they do these things better in Algeciras and we decided to go as soon as we could afford it.

On Tuesday, 29th March, our refit at an end, we sailed for England. Our eight-hour full-speed trial worked out at 24 knots, which was pretty good for our class of cruiser. We reached Spithead four days later and the midshipmen went on leave. I decided that I could not afford it and settled down for a lonely spell on board. I feel sure that if I had let my family know they would have sent the necessary funds, but I was very anxious to become self-supporting. At this time my pay was 2s. 6d. a day and I had £20 a year compulsory private allowance. The midshipmen had 1s. 9d. a day and £50 a year private allowance. I could look for about £5 : 10s. a month, out of which I had to pay my mess bill and my servant and laundry; there was practically nothing left. I found I could not afford wine and sold my wine bill (we were allowed 10s. a month) to one of the commissioned officers. Unfortunately he not only forgot to pay me but he exceeded the allowance, and I was severely told off by the Commander for drinking so heavily—a reputation which I had scarcely earned. It was about this time that I was introduced to a famous second-hand uniform firm, with great relief to my exchequer. I also started an allotment of £1 a month from my pay to my outfitters; it went on, somewhat

increased, for ten years and the improvement in credit was magical. I found that an allotment of £1 a month to Gieve's permitted of an overdraft on uniform account of £20; also they would not object to cashing small, and slightly post-dated, cheques.

On Saturday, 16th April—another Saturday night at sea and I had to reply for the ladies again—we sailed for Deal and two days later we proceeded into the North Sea for manœuvres. They lasted about a week and it was then I discovered a harder side of the Paymaster's life. Three of us were put in charge of all coding and decoding of signals—a responsible and trying job—which meant that we averaged eight hours out of every twenty-four in the intelligence office in addition to our ordinary duties. For instance, on one day I had the middle watch (midnight to 4 A.M.), afternoon (noon till 4 P.M.) and first (8 P.M. to midnight) in addition to the whole forenoon in the office making up arrears of my ordinary work, and, to make matters worse, I was feeling seasick most of the time. Coding and seasickness do not go well together. Executive officers were luckier, as they dropped all extraneous duties when they went into three or four watches. We had one cruiser action during the day, sinking two cruisers and losing one, and one heavy-destroyer attack at night, but only the higher command knew what was really happening. In one of my later ships the Captain always made a practice of having officers aft and explaining the exact position, and that seemed to give much more point to the proceedings. On Friday, 22nd April, we anchored in Cromarty Firth, where it was cold and rough and trying to snow. Five days' mails

came off but no letters for me—though the size of the office mail spoke of busy days ahead. After a quiet week-end we recommenced exercises on the Monday but later parted with the Home Fleet and proceeded with the Atlantic Fleet to Scapa Flow. That night we took in 1000 tons of coal.

On the following Tuesday we sailed for Margate with *Doris* and *Black Prince*. The Home Fleet passed us in the opposite direction during the afternoon doing a full-speed trial to Norway—a very fine sight. At sea our chief form of recreation was hockey on the quarter-deck, which we played during the first dog watch. Ordinary hockey sticks and a flat rope grummet made a very fast game of it, and games between the ward-room and gunroom were very popular. The warrant officers are too sedate for this.

We arrived at Margate at 8 A.M. on Thursday, 5th May; on the Friday we first heard that the King was ill, and on Saturday were greatly shocked to hear of his death. That afternoon we fired 68 minute guns and all officers paraded on the quarterdeck in full-dress uniform. On the Sunday we went round to Dover to receive any foreign royalty arriving for the funeral, and on the Monday afternoon we dressed ship for the arrival of the King and Queen of Norway. That night we returned to Margate. There on the Wednesday we had a rough time in half a gale; all boats were hoisted in; we were rolling badly, and we had to raise steam and pay out more cable to prevent us dragging. When we did finally get ashore on the Thursday it was to find all the shops shut, and we returned empty-handed.

On the Friday two of us, lusting for exercise and fresh air, hired bicycles and rode to Canterbury to see the Cathedral. We achieved our object but had a flat tyre on the way back, and by dint of many halts and much pumping we only just caught the last boat off at 11 P.M. The next three days were too foggy to move from our anchorage, but on 18th May we anchored at The Nore, in sight of Sheerness and Southend, and manned ship for the arrival of the German Emperor. On Friday, 20th, we held a memorial service for King Edward on the quarterdeck and next morning we turned out at 5 A.M. to dress ship for the Kaiser's departure.

Three days later, in company with *Doris*, we steamed round to Dover where we joined the rest of the Atlantic Fleet and proceeded down Channel. We picked up a small boat which appeared to belong to the s.s. *Skerryvore*, and later we heard that the *Skerryvore* had been sunk in collision that day with the loss of twenty-four lives.

26th May saw me started on a new line of duties which had nothing to do with my job as a paymaster. This was known as "Plotting" and was performed in the Fire Control position in the fore-top. The system was purely mathematical and consisted of receiving the range of the enemy ship from a midshipman at the rangefinder and the exact time of each reading from a seaman with a stop-watch, plotting the result on a piece of squared paper and so extending the resulting line or curve as to be able to read off the range at a fixed time ahead if the enemy did not alter course or speed. As soon as I was proficient in this I worked

similar results for changes of deflection—right or left. With practice one became rather an expert forecaster of both range and deflection. These were communicated to the Gunnery Lieutenant or other officer in charge of the firing, who passed them on direct to the guns or varied them slightly before doing so, as his judgment dictated. If my results were accepted and we did a good firing I was very pleased with myself; if my results were not taken and we did a bad firing I was both sorry and pleased. I found that the gunnery people accepted my forecasts more and more as time went on.

Next day saw yet another opening for me. We went to night-defence stations and I was given control of one of the searchlights, starboard No. 4, from the main-top. Fore-top by day and main-top at night was a pleasant break from office work, even if it made life rather strenuous.

On Sunday, 29th May, we arrived back at Gibraltar and went alongside the South Mole. Next morning we commenced coaling at 5.30 A.M. Continuing my policy of working in with the Executive, I volunteered for the first time and the Commander was pleased. I worked with the quarterdeckmen as an ordinary hand, running barrows and filling bags alternately. It was terribly hot and dirty and very hard work. We had taken in 1500 tons at an average of 207 tons an hour by 2 P.M. and, after working the worst of the coal-dust off my skin with vaseline, I went off with the rest of the gunroom for a bathe in Rosia Bay.

A day or two later we went over to Tetuan on the

African side; more night defence and my beloved No. 4 starboard searchlight. Next day, and for some days after, we ran targets by day, practising for Gunlayers' Tests, and exercised night defence by night, including one exciting attack by the Gibraltar torpedo boats. Probably as the result of my long periods in the fighting-tops, which can be very uncomfortable in wind or rain, I developed earache and a boil on my hindquarters.

On Tuesday, 7th June, we carried out our Annual Gunlayers' Tests. All sixteen 6″ guns and both 9·2″ turrets fired. The last of the 6″ made a world's record: 6 rounds 6 hits in 27½ seconds—faster than we could do it in the gunroom.

On Wednesday we did our Light Gunlayers' Tests, but with only moderate results.

During that week we had been unable to land, as Tetuan was unsafe for foreigners. The bathing each evening from the ship had been fine. It was an unwritten law that everyone must dive off the quarterdeck, about 18 feet from the water-line, and there were some most amusing results. We varied that, after Gunlayers', by exploding some depth charges and going away in boats to pick up the fish stunned by the explosion. We got enormous hauls, and the racing about after the big fellows was great fun. A sailing-race for all boats was won by the Captain's galley.

We returned to Gibraltar for the week-end and I played cricket against the ship's company and water polo for *Drake* versus *Prince of Wales*. On the Monday we sailed for Ireland.

Bantry Bay was our destination, and after a quiet trip we anchored off Glengariff on Thursday, 16th June. What lovely scenery is there! Everything looked unbelievably green. Those who fished got out their rods and tackle; the rest of us thought of golf and country walks. The object of our visit was to calibrate the guns—that is, to see that when they are sighted at a certain range they actually fire that range—and to run our torpedoes for testing purposes. On the Monday Lord Kitchener came on board and we went out to do a special firing. He came down to the plotting-room —we had moved below, where we got our information by voice-pipe or navyphone—and had quite a long talk with me about my system and the results achieved. I was much impressed.

Annual Manœuvres proper, as distinct from Fleet Exercises, followed and lasted a week. During that period I spent most of my nights in the main-top. The crisis was reached at 5 A.M. on the last day when we met the enemy battle-fleet and fought a big battle off the Old Head of Kinsale. Fifteen battleships on each side were put out of action by the umpires, and survivors and sunk returned to Falmouth together. Right in the middle of this period—on Friday, 15th July—I completed my first year in the Navy and was rated Clerk.[1] The Fleet Paymaster gave me a first-class certificate with the maximum of 100 marks and the Captain was very kind. That night, in spite of my poverty, I "passed the wine" in the gunroom. It was a milestone for me, as the beatings stop after the first

[1] Now Paymaster-Midshipman.

year. Clerks also wear a frock-coat and sword with full dress; I had my brother's old frock-coat and a second-hand sword.

Later in the month King George went on board *Dreadnought* and we carried out more exercises in the Channel. His Majesty also inspected the *Drake*. All officers were received aft and heads of departments shook hands.

Early in August we sailed for Folkestone to land some Territorials in connection with Army Manœuvres, but, finding on arrival that they had landed at Sheppey, we turned back and bombarded Newhaven instead. A few days later we went round to Spithead, took in 1700 tons of coal and sent the midshipmen on leave. I followed them a fortnight later.

Four of our midshipmen left the ship on Monday, 19th September, and twelve new ones joined, making twenty-one of them in the gunroom. I was quite charmed to find myself selected to pull in the six-oared gig race for the Battenberg Cup. It meant heavy training but gave a great zest to life—and there were plenty after my place.

We left Spithead with the Atlantic Fleet on 22nd September and, after various plotting exercises at sea, arrived in Bantry Bay on the Saturday. Rear-Admiral Sir Frederick Hamilton inspected us while there and we dined the Admiral and his staff in the gunroom.

Wednesday, 5th October, and Thursday, 6th, were regatta days. Our two gunroom crews in the Battenberg Cup were first and third—a splendid result—and *Drake* ended fifth in the list of points for all races. A

few days later one of our senior midshipmen won the Atlantic Fleet Sailing Cup. Then we left for Gibraltar.

Gibraltar, at this time of year, is an ideal spot for the young and fit. I was supremely happy for the next five months. Office work went on as usual, of course, but I could usually get away at tea-time at the latest and we had hockey, soccer or water-polo matches almost every day—either against naval ships and establishments or against units of the garrison. We also worked in an occasional picnic—sailing or on horseback—and three of us went over to see the long-promised bull-fight at Algeciras. The picadors are mounted at Algeciras and the whole spectacle is more imposing than at La Linea. The day we went several bulls were killed and several horses gored—the horses were not good enough, in our opinion—but the great moment came when the star matador was himself caught and gored, and then jumped on, by the bull. We got some excellent photographs of this episode and I must admit that we had little sympathy for the victim of the tragedy. It seemed only fair that the bull should win sometimes, though I fear he did not live long to tell the tale.

During the rest of October and most of November we were in and out of harbour with the Atlantic Fleet doing target practice. The day we marked targets for Fleet Battle Practice was most impressive; it seemed that nothing could have lived within range of those guns. In the individual firings by the eight battleships and four armoured cruisers we came out second at gunnery and first with torpedoes.

Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg inspected us on

Sunday, 30th October—the last occasion on which I ever saw this famous cruiser Admiral. He was immensely popular, and I well remember the bitter resentment in the Fleet when his retirement was forced by a newspaper campaign soon after the outbreak of war.

Early in November our "Funny Party" gave a concert—a most amusing affair. The sailors love these shows and the officers give them every kind of assistance they can. We had one or two really good singers of the "robust" type, whilst the sketches in which the bluejackets "took off" the marines, or vice versa, were most hilarious affairs. I remember that concert particularly well as I was still feeling a bit rattled as the result of a meeting with a shark while bathing over the side. A big fellow about 7 feet long was reported very close to me by onlookers on the upper deck and I had to kick and splash hard to make him keep his distance. It was very unlikely he was a man-eater, but he was the first I had met and I didn't like him. After they had fished me out they fished for him, but without success.

I had for some weeks been training up a gunroom side at water polo and in due course we played our local Derby against the ship's company. They won a tremendous game by one goal to love, and most of our team were waterlogged at the finish. A few days later the Paymaster and I acted as judges at the ship's water sports. Rivalry between the foretopmen, maintopmen, quarterdeckmen, stokers and marines was intense.

At the end of November I was suddenly appointed to H.M.S. *Argyll* as Captain's Clerk, or secretary, and the flagship gave me a great send-off.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN'S CLERK

THE transfer from *Drake* to *Argyll* was an important milestone for me. In the *Drake* I had been supernumerary and without much responsibility in the office; I was picking up the work, learning the ropes. In the *Argyll* I became a separate entity. I was the Captain's personal staff-officer and secretary, the keeper of his conscience and the link between him and the rest of the officers and the ship's company. In after years I have felt that I was too young for the post—I certainly found it a great strain at first after my easy-going life in the flagship—but I suspect the experience was good for me. There is no doubt that, after a month or two at the job, I should have resented any suggestion that I was too young for it. I had just celebrated my nineteenth birthday.

The immediate reason for the appointment was a change of Captain in the *Argyll*. Captain Cecil Lambert left and Captain Michael Culme-Seymour took command. He came of a well-known naval family and was already on the high road to the Admirals' list; in later years he achieved one of his dearest ambitions and became Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet; and then, most unfortunately, he died. My predecessor was a senior Assistant Paymaster, a very able

fellow, and I think he wanted to put in some time at ordinary Paymaster's duties before following his old chief to some new appointment in a secretarial capacity.

In the *Drake* I had lived with the midshipmen in the gunroom. In the *Argyll* there were no midshipmen when I joined, so I messed with the senior officers in the wardroom. The change took some of the punch out of life but it was certainly quieter and more seemly—and probably more in keeping with my new duties.

Perhaps rather typically my first deed for my new ship was to play centre-forward at hockey against my old shipmates in the *Drake* and help to give them a really good hiding by eight goals to two.

Thereafter I had to get down to the "Annual Returns" and to the squaring-up of the seamen's papers for the year. At the end of every year the Captain makes a confidential report on each officer, and assesses the character and ability of each seaman, stoker and marine in the ship. This work was most useful in that it put me into immediate and close contact with all officers of divisions and heads of departments. On Sunday, 1st January, we mustered the whole crew by the ship's ledgers and I read out the character and ability which had been awarded. These assessments are most important to the men, as upon them hang their future chances of promotion and extra pay.

The conduct-books are kept by the Captain's Clerk and in them are recorded all punishments given throughout a man's service in the ship. At the end of each year a line is drawn and a "bad hat" can make a fresh start. If a man is transferred to another ship during the year

a copy of his conduct-sheet, up to date, is sent with him. Young fellows are occasionally transferred deliberately when it is felt they have got into a bad set.

The muster by the ship's ledger is the survival of a method which was introduced a long time ago to prevent fraud. In the early days of the Royal Navy, captains placed on the ship's books the names of seamen who had never seen the ship. They then drew the wages of these ghosts and the Admiralty were none the wiser. Actually, the muster has another advantage in that it gives the Captain his one opportunity of meeting individual ratings face to face.

Early in January we went into dry-dock for annual overhaul and refit. That meant there were no boats to catch and we only had to step ashore for football, hockey, golf or whatever took our fancy. My only trouble was the absence of young officers of my own age to keep pace with my passion for exercise. I rejuvenated some of the wardroom officers before I had been there very long.

In the middle of the month the petty officers gave a ball at the Gymnasium and twelve of us went. It was completely different from any other ball I have ever attended. On arrival we were marched through two lines of guests to the strains of "See the conquering hero comes", but after that somewhat disconcerting start we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Sailors have some weird and wonderful dances little known to the civilian world.

The Atlantic Fleet, which had gone home to give

Christmas leave, returned to Gibraltar in February and ended our peaceful occupation of the sports grounds. In addition, the Admiral's office brought me lots of real hard work. This was not altogether a disadvantage, as I was getting woefully short of cash. It is true that my salary had risen from half a crown to four shillings a day, but, on the other hand, financial difficulties had developed at home and my private allowance of £20 a year was stopped. Henceforward I must paddle my own canoe.

Some midshipmen joined us and we started a gun-room mess. I was relieved to find that two of them were almost equally as hard up as myself and thenceforward we hunted together, inexpensively. Two of us shared one stiff shirt between us, which meant that we could not dine out on the same night, and we washed our own handkerchiefs and socks in the bathroom when no one was about. A sum of eight shillings from the *Drake*'s wine surplus helped matters, but we spent most of it on a big tea ashore. Our boys beat those of the *Formidable* in cutters and I won half a crown.

One stormy Sunday two of us landed and climbed the Rock in search of Barbary apes—a relic of the Moorish occupation. Whilst standing under the Signal Station at the top, the building was struck by lightning and the staff blown away. We were badly shaken up and the search for the apes was, of necessity, deferred.

On the conclusion of our refit, we swung for deviation of compasses and then went across to the African coast to work up for Gunlayers' Tests. In the final

results we were second in the Navy and first in the Atlantic Fleet. The conclusion of these firings at the beginning of April relieved me of the plotting and gave me more leisure to carry out my ordinary work.

I was finding my job very delightful in every way. By this time I was thoroughly familiar with a ship's administration and fully conversant with the Naval Discipline Act. In addition, Captain Culme-Seymour was one of the most charming men I have ever met. Once we really got to know and trust each other, he combined efficiency and informality to a marked degree. I remember well a particular instance of this. I had taken a large quantity of official papers aft for signature but found the Captain's wife in possession and the Captain changing in his inner cabin. I stood talking to her for a few minutes and then hinted through the keyhole that the papers were rather urgent, as a boat from the flagship was waiting alongside. Out dashed the skipper, dressed only in a white shirt and socks. As he passed me I noticed with some surprise that the white shirt had a pink tail. He must have seen my look. "Oh, that's all right," he said, "the missus has just been repairing it for me. Don't you like the colour?" There followed an invitation to dinner and a particularly pleasant evening round the fire.

The lack of privacy was always, for us juniors, complete. We slung our hammocks in an open flat—a highway for officers and marines—and we had our sea chests in rows in the same open space. We dressed and undressed in the sight of all men, and the whole lot of us

shared three or four hip-baths in our tiny bathroom. This meant a rush for the baths as soon as our morning signal exercise or physical drill was done, the first to arrive getting the use of the hot taps while the others paddled about on the wet floor trying to shave. The details of one's anatomy were known to all; no shortcomings, such as my missing shoulder muscle, could be concealed. One of the younger midshipmen, who had a rather high-pitched voice, was observed not to be developing properly. A special drill was invented. He was stood on the end of the gunroom table, facing outwards and quite stiff, and then his feet were knocked forward. He fell three or four feet with a jarring thud. A few weeks of this treatment had the desired effect.

Meanwhile I had discovered that two of our recently joined midshipmen were respectively middle- and welter-weight champions of the Navy. They were not good friends and would not box with each other. Both, however, used me as a sparring partner. I was hopelessly outclassed, but usually made a decent show till I got over-confident and hit harder than I had intended; then I was polished off. It became a form of dog-watch amusement for the Captain and officers to come up on deck and see me knocked out.

In June we joined the huge fleet collected at Spithead in connection with the coronation of King George. On Saturday, 24th, two days after the ceremony at the Abbey, the King reviewed his Fleet. Ships were dressed over all, officers in full dress, seamen manning ship and cheering as the Royal yacht passed. It was

a never-to-be-forgotten afternoon. We were allowed guests provided they kept out of sight.

Thereafter Prince Louis of Battenberg took the Fleet to sea for exercises in the Channel, which were followed by Annual Manœuvres lasting till the end of July. I took the opportunity of coaling in a bunker but decided I would never risk it again; solid lumps of coal-dust formed in the back of my throat, I found great difficulty in breathing and nearly expired from dust and heat. Stoking furnaces during a speed trial is another duty which, speaking from one experience, I would not recommend.

My studies in naval law and procedure were now sufficiently advanced to risk a try-out and in August I occupied the position of Clerk at my first Court. The occasion was a collision between two steam pinnaces, and I trust we allocated the blame to the right quarter. A Court of Inquiry is rather like a Coroner's Inquest; it sifts the facts but does not punish. If drastic action appears necessary a court-martial is convened.

After a satisfactory inspection by the Rear-Admiral in September we settled down for the regatta in Bantry Bay. This is always a great event in the Navy year and, indeed, it epitomises the results of months of training and hard work. *Argyll* did wonderfully well from the start. We won the third, fourth and fifth races and ended up the first day one and a half points behind the flagship, but far ahead of the rest of the Atlantic Fleet. We also won the first two races on the second day and

went ahead, but later fell back owing to foreign ratings' and band races in which we could not compete. In the final placings *Prince of Wales* was first with 53 points, *Argyll* second with 40, and the next ship 15. We took the All-Comers' Trophy[1] and the Gigs' Cup, and won £30 in prize money. That evening we beat the officers of the *Venerable* in the Atlantic Fleet Golf Cup by six matches to one. The *Argyll* was a fine ship for sport, and a happy one; the two usually go together.

During the autumn we carried out our annual gunnery and torpedo firings off Portland and docked at Plymouth to "make good defects". While there I was selected to play hockey for Devon against Cornwall, and came off late and had my leave stopped for a week. The great thing about the Navy is that you always know exactly what you can, and cannot, do. At the beginning of September we proceeded to Spithead.

[1] From the spectacular point of view the All-Comers' Trophy race was, undoubtedly, the most exciting and amusing. In all other races the boats were pulled by the regulation number of rowers, but in the All-Comers no such rules applied. Extra thwarts and rowlocks could be fitted, the steersman could be slung in a species of bos'n's chair over the stern, and the maximum number of rowers crowded into each boat. Any kind of boat could enter and any number of men pull one oar. A six-oared gig thus became a "centipede" and, though overloaded and correspondingly low in the water, was, in fine weather, capable of tremendous speed; in the least popple it would become waterlogged. The boats were difficult to steer and collisions were inevitable. Many a half-drowned crew has returned from the All-Comers' race under steam.

CHAPTER V

TO INDIA

It had been known for some time past that King George V had decided to go to Delhi to be crowned Emperor of India, and there had been much speculation in the Fleet as to what ships would provide the Escort Squadron. Some thought that one of the cruiser squadrons would go complete; others that, in order not to upset Fleet efficiency, single ships would be chosen as and when they could be spared; no one had any particular reason to think that *Argyll* would be one of them. However, there it was: the squadron to accompany the *Medina* was to be *Defence*, *Argyll*, *Cochrane* and *Natal*, under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Colin Keppel, flying his flag in *Medina*.

We had been at Spithead about a week—the weather very foul—when King George arrived at Portsmouth at noon on Saturday, 11th November. All ships in harbour and at Spithead fired a royal salute. Another was fired at 3 P.M. when the *Medina* came out of harbour. The Home Fleet escorted us down the Channel, *Medina* leading the line, and we ran into dirty weather off Ushant. That night my head-lashing broke—it was not cut this time—and I slept on the deck where I hit it.

In the Bay we struck a howling gale, and even the oldest sailors were seasick. We had our jolly-boat stove in, the port boom smashed, the ladder[1] broken in half and much damage to furniture and crockery. We felt very sorry for the Queen and her ladies-in-waiting in the *Medina*. *Defence* and *Natal* had their torpedo-nets washed over the side and fell astern, but re-joined next day. We had no nets.

The weather improved as we approached and entered Gibraltar Bay, where we coaled with native labour. The Atlantic Fleet and the fortress fired a salute as the Royal Squadron left harbour. On Friday, 17th, we passed Malta in fine weather and on Monday, 20th, entered Port Said. It is a queer place to approach; first houses and shipping and then palm trees seem to rise straight out of the sea ahead, and it is only later that the land follows; usually it is the other way round. We were escorted in by the 6th Cruiser Squadron and the town was illuminated, officers being allowed ashore. We did not think much of Port Said as a town; it looked unfinished and tawdry, and half the houses had the appearance of being either built up or pulled down; the streets were dirty. The harbour was much more interesting with its continual bustle of arrival and departure, its swarms of small boats with their picturesque occupants, and the imposing statue of the maker of the canal, old man Lesseps. We watched the Khedive drive through the streets, and then five of us played for the squadron against Port Said at cricket, followed by a big firework display, and returned on

[1] Gangway-ladder, secured on the upper deck when at sea.

board to find that we had been coaled by native labour in our absence.

At 6.30 next morning we entered the canal in charge of a pilot. We were all agog to see the canal, its sides lined with cheering Egyptians and Arabs, but we were much surprised at its narrowness. Thirty or forty yards seemed to be about the average except when special bays were constructed to allow one ship to pass another. We saw some truly remarkable mirages as the day grew hotter. At 8 P.M. we entered the Gulf of Suez. We were now feeling the heat pretty badly after the bitter cold of Spithead. We went into full white uniform, spread our hammocks on the upper deck (which meant turning out at 5.30 A.M. when the hoses began to play), and made good use of the canvas bath rigged in the quarterdeck. The weather remained fine and calm till we entered Aden at 10 A.M. on Monday, 27th.

Aden is imposing—the Gibraltar of the East. A splendid natural harbour; a huge bay shut in by towering rocky peaks; bare, hard, forbidding-looking cliffs—"the barren rocks of Aden", as the song has it; no vegetation; just a natural fortress and harbour and, I should imagine, the devil of a place to live in. The King landed to inspect troops; we took in 300 tons of coal and sailed at 6 P.M.

Next day a passing merchant ship reported a cyclone in the Indian Ocean so we made all fast for heavy weather. A liner which had passed ahead of us at Aden caught it badly, but we were lucky and had perfect weather to Bombay, where we arrived on Saturday,

2nd December. We were a trifle ahead of programme, so cruised about outside before entering—a kindly gesture on the part of the King, as I imagine an early arrival would badly upset arrangements ashore. The squadron dressed ship and fired a salute of 101 guns. His Majesty landed for a State ceremony and one of our midshipmen was put in charge of the King's Barge; he had been a King's medallist at Dartmouth. That night the ships and town were illuminated.

Meanwhile some excitement had been caused among the officers by a signal reporting thirty-two invitations for big-game shooting up-country with rajas of various states. Three were allocated to the wardroom and two to the gunroom of the *Argyll*. We played drunken coachman for hours to decide the lucky ones. The unsuccessful were cheered up with promises of free railway passes all over India.

On the Sunday our contingent of the naval guard of honour left for Delhi. Next day I landed in India for the first time and duly appreciated the importance of the occasion. Two of us landed at the Appollo Bunder—the Gateway of India—hired a gharry and drove round the native quarter. We saw all sorts of costumes and types and some very beautiful street decorations. Then we went on to the Yacht Club, of which we had been made honorary members. We repeated the trip next day with cameras and went on to the Exhibition of Old Bombay, which we thought a very poor show.

Next day I stayed on board and fell a victim to the local quacks. I had two corns extracted with great success and no pain, my ears cleaned and my fortune

told. Even in those days I believed in trying everything once. I kept notes of that fortune, and here they are:

1. Very intellectual and should have gone to a University.
2. Have had worries in youth but these will get less and less as time goes on.
3. Will meet a near relation early next year.
4. Shall do well in the Service; so well as to surprise both me and my relations.
5. Shall have a legacy in 1912. [My father died in that year.]
6. At present hard up and money goes quickly. As time goes on will get richer.

I was grateful for that last clause; it reduced the fee considerably.

Our first English mail arrived on Friday, 8th December, but I had only one letter, from my mother. Why are first mails almost always disappointingly small? On the Tuesday I met a friend from a P. & O. liner in harbour and we played golf at Bandra. Believe it or not, my first tee-shot stuck in the top of a coconut palm and I had to send my small brown caddie up to get it down—for which service he claimed almost the price of the ball. On the Wednesday we were coaled by native labour. They took twenty-one solid hours to get in 900 tons.

The weather being too hot for violent exercise, I had taken up foils and sabres. We had some great fights—especially with the sabres. One evening I was thus employed when a man was reported killed on the mess deck. It appeared that two stokers had been

fighting when one was overcome by the heat, fell backwards and broke his neck. What with the taking of evidence, the preparation of reports, the Coroner's Inquest and the subsequent Court of Inquiry, I had a very busy three days. The finding was "accidental death", for which we were thankful. At the conclusion of the business I went ashore and was tattooed in Grant Road. This was so successful that almost all the gunroom were done in turn, and some weird and wonderful designs were chosen.

Christmas Day in great heat seemed unreal and the men hardly bothered to decorate the mess decks. I attended Early Communion at 7.30 A.M. and Divine Service at 9.30. Thereafter five of us pulled the whaler about five miles to Elephanta Island and explored the caves. Hard going—but we sailed back.

On Saturday, 30th December, Bombay Yacht Club held a regatta for the Escort Squadron. *Argyll* kept up her great name for sport by winning seven of the ten pulling races. One race was lost by going the wrong side of the mark and another by fouling a buoy; otherwise we practically swept the board.

I made a good deal in bets with other ships and found I could raise about £5 from all sources, so the Engineer Sub-Lieutenant and I decided to go for a trip up-country. The Captain asked us to take two midshipmen with us and off we all went.

CHAPTER VI

LUCKNOW, CAWNPORE, DELHI, AGRA

As this eight-day journey in India, at a total cost of £5, was a great event in my young life, I propose to quote verbatim from the diary which I wrote at the time—mis-spellings included. Anglo-Indians please forgive.

January 1st, 1912. Went ashore 1.15 boat and caught 2.30 train—Punjaub Mail—at Victoria Terminus. During the evening we climbed the Ghauts, the air being beautifully cool and the scenery very fine in places, though very arid. Stopped at Kasara and they brought along some tea. By 5.15 we were well up the Ghauts and shipped a second 100-ton engine. Crossed the highest bridge in India near Thull Ghaut with a clear drop of several hundred feet. Went through endless tunnels. Ghauts are 3000 ft. high, one or two peaks being 5000. We boarded the restaurant car at Manmad at 7.30 P.M. and had a jolly good feed. Turned in about 9 P.M.

January 2nd (*Tuesday*). Did not turn out till about 9 A.M. Very cold last night and the contrast to Bombay made it rather difficult to sleep. Breakfast (a very good one) at 9.30. Saw a good many Red Buck out of the windows. Arrived Jhansi about noon and changed trains. Reached Cawnpore about 5 P.M. and Lucknow itself about 7. Drove to the Civil and Military Hotel where they do one very well at a cheap rate. Got a

room each, with bath. An Indian ayah woman appeared to expect to bath me, but I refused. Dinner at 8. Played 4-snooker and turned in about 10. Slept well under five blankets, the temperature being at about frost point.

January 3rd (*Wednesday*). Was called at 6 A.M. and had Choti Hazri in bed. Then hot bath and we were all ready to leave at 7. We had hired two gharries for the day and a good guide. The idea was to drive out of the city and follow Havelock's march in with the first relief force. The first place of interest was the shell marked and dilapidated Alum Bagh, where we saw the tombs of Havelock himself and his son. I took photographs of both tomb and bagh. We then drove along the entire route to the Residency, stopping to look at various tombs and places of interest pointed out by the guide. Our first sight of the Residency was the old shot-marked Bailey Gate, which was held by Aitken during the whole of the siege with only one gun. He got the V.C. and a fine eulogy from the C. in C. for his bravery and dash. The next building inspected was the one in which the women and children were housed. During the entire siege they lived in a sort of cellar underground and only one of the enemy's shells penetrated their shelter. Large numbers of them died from bad air and illness rendered worse by a pest of flies. Just above their shelter the room had stood where Lawrence[1] received his death wound—having refused

[1] Most people are familiar with the simple words inscribed upon his tomb: "Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty"; but relatively few, I think, have read his grim instructions to Brigadier Inglis, on whom the command devolved; "Never surrender! If the small body of men under your command is unable to hold out until the arrival of reinforcements, the women and children must be blown up; the men must fight their way out."

to move his quarters. It must be understood that in all buildings the walls only remained, the rebels having returned after Colin Campbell marched out and set fire to the place. We then went on to the Residency itself over which a dilapidated Union Jack was flying. The Residency had shot holes all over it and had tumbled a good deal into ruin. The actual building covered about an acre of ground. In front were placed two of Peel's field guns from the Shannon, the other two being located a short distance off. These guns were worked by a small party of sailors during the siege and were of tremendous value. We went the whole round of the outworks and were greatly surprised at the nearness of the enemy's positions, barely the width of a road separating the two. They had memorial stones placed at every post, the principal of which were the Redan Battery, Innes' Post, Gubbin's Battery and the Cawnpore Battery. Squares near the Bailey Guard were manned by Sikhs and Financial Clerks respectively, the enemy post opposite the latter being only 70 yds. away. The guide also showed us where Johannes' house stood; the top tower was manned by the famous rebel "Bob the Nailer" during the siege—his name arising from the fact that he seldom missed bagging any of the garrison who appeared in sight. After finishing the inspection of the Residency we went back to the hotel and had a big 10 o'clock breakfast, afterwards playing snooker till noon.

At 12 o'clock we got into the carriages again, the idea this time being to follow Sir Colin Campbell's route both in and out. We first went to the building in which he placed the women and children after leaving the Residency, whilst waiting to see whether he could safely reach the Alum Bagh. This building was very

high and we had a splendid view from the roof. We then followed his route round by the left bank of the river and examined various memorials including the spot on which he and Outram shook hands.

Last of all we went to the famous Secunderabagh. This was a fairly big park (about 4 acres) surrounded by a 12 ft. wall. They had to fire on it for hours before breaching it, and when they did so the exasperated British charged in and killed the whole Garrison of Sepoys, numbering about 2000 men. The breach has now been repaired but is plainly noticeable.

Before returning we had a look through the "Palace of Light", an enormous showy structure built as a tomb for his Prime Minister by the King of Delhi.

We arrived back at the hotel about 3 P.M. and played snooker till dinner time. A good meal.

January 4th (*Thursday*). Called at 7.15 A.M. and dressed after Choti-Hazri in bed. Drove to the station at 9 A.M. and left for Cawnpore, where we arrived at 10.45. Went to Civil and Military Hotel and hired a carriage and guide. Then drove straight to Wheeler's entrenchment on the flat ground outside Cawnpore and went carefully over the whole of it. The old well which was used for drawing water during the siege was still open and one can easily imagine its very exposed position. We then went into the Memorial Church which has been erected just on the edge of the Entrenchment. The walls are covered with memorial tablets to various people who died during the siege and in the subsequent massacre, and has rather a morbid effect. From there we followed the path of the released garrison to the banks of the Ganges—to the spot known as the "Murder Ghaut". What happened there is well known. The boats, when

crowded with British, were found to be aground on the mud and thousands of rebels appeared on the banks and massacred the occupants with rifle fire. One can imagine this very easily as the river is one vast mud flat which only becomes a great water course in the rainy season.

From the river we went to the Memorial Statue over the well, into which the bodies of the living and dead women and children were thrown when taken from the slaughter house hard by. About two hundred had been spared from the massacre in the boats, only to have five butchers turned in on them on the approach of the British relieving force. The Memorial Statue is an angel with wings and has a most beautiful face. Looked at from one side it seemed to smile and from the other side it wept—a most curious phenomenon, whether the result of accident or design I do not know. No natives are allowed in the memorial gardens, which are beautifully laid out, and incidentally swarm with monkeys.

We arrived back at the hotel about 1 P.M. and had lunch, after which we were amused by native jugglers on the verandah. We caught the 4.40 train for Delhi, arriving there at midnight. We had tried to sleep in the train fully dressed and now made another and more successful attempt in the well-furnished waiting-room. Unfortunately we had been forestalled and all the best billets were already occupied.

5th January (*Friday*). We turned out about 7 A.M. in the waiting-room, all of us having more or less fat heads after our broken and uncomfortable night. Breakfast was at 8 A.M. on the station and about 9 we hired a guide and carriage for the day and began a long drive round.

The first place visited was the famous ridge, a low mound about 60 ft. above sea level lying just outside Delhi. This position was occupied by the British during the whole of the mutiny siege when, with 5000 men (sometimes only 2000) they besieged nearly 100,000. We visited all the places of interest in turn and, from the top of the clock tower (in the centre of the position), we had an excellent view of the enormous camps and in the distance the Arena in which the recent Coronation Durbar took place. Continuing our way along the ridge we inspected the positions of the various breaching batteries and finally re-entered the City by the much hammered Cashmir gate. We took photos of this interesting spot, it being the first place at which the British made good their entry.

We then drove round past the telegraph office and the site of the old Magazine (the Magazine itself having been blown up by Willoughby, after a brave defence, on the outbreak of the Mutiny) and thence to the Palace and Fort. These two last are really one building and about 300 years old. They are tremendously strong and it seems wonderful with what speed they were captured in the final assault. The Palace itself is beautiful to a degree, being mostly of white marble inlaid with mosaic work and red sandstone. We went through all the private apartments and bathrooms of the old Kings of Delhi and their wives and finally through the Government Museum. The Palace was originally enormously rich in silver and precious stones but these were looted by the Maharajah of Bhartpur, whilst the famous gold peacock throne was taken by the Persians and is now in Teheran.

After leaving the Fort we drove round the walls, leaving by the Delhi Gate and re-entering by the

Cashmir Gate. Near the latter we saw the spot where the ever-famous John Nicholson was killed in the act of urging on his troops.

We had lunch on the station at 1 o'clock and rested till 2.30 when we had the ghari round again. This time our objective was the tomb of Humayun, an old King of Delhi. On the way we passed the ruins of ancient Delhi and the remains of what must have been an enormously strong fort two thousand years ago. The walls were still almost intact in places and of great thickness and strength. The tomb itself was a very fine building of red sandstone surmounted by white marble in three huge domes. It is one of the finest buildings in India; fifteen million rupees were expended on its erection by the wife of the dead King. From the military point of view it was most interesting. It was whilst this place was crowded with 10,000 armed retainers immediately after the fall of Delhi that Hodson of Hodson's Horse rode up with 100 troopers and demanded the surrender of the King; and such was the dauntless look of this remarkable man that his demand was actually acceded to and he marched the King back in triumph, a prisoner, to the city. A few days later he repeated this exploit and captured the three sons of the King with only 200 men against 6000. On the way to the gates of the city, however, the mutinous mob began to press his troop and, after stripping his prisoners and explaining what murderers they were, he shot them all with his own hand—a fate they richly deserved. The exact spot where the three prisoners were shot is shown just outside the Delhi Gate.

We drove straight back to the station after leaving Humayun's tomb and almost immediately after alighting found I had left my camera in the carriage. I at

once reported the matter to the police and they were so smart that I had it back within half an hour. We had dinner on the station, where our train was already lying ready to start for Agra at midnight, and then turned in.

6th January (*Saturday*). We arrived at Agra at 9 A.M. and drove straight to the Cecil Hotel for breakfast. About 10.30 we hired a phaeton for the day and drove out five miles to Akbar's tomb. This is a most wonderful building and supposed to come second only to the Taj itself. The Sikandarah or gate of the tomb is very fine —built of red sandstone and marble—each corner being surmounted by a tall marble tower 220 feet high, to the top of one of which we climbed and had a fine view. The tomb itself is also of marble and sandstone and very massive. The whole is inlaid with mosaic work and has a scroll of ancient writing running round. We went in and inspected the great Akbar's tomb and other items of interest. They had a fine lot of monkeys on the place of whom we got some amusing photographs.

When we got back to the hotel we found there had been a mistake about our rooms, which had already been reserved, so after having lunch we had to move over to the Metropole.

We then drove through the native quarter and across the river to the tomb of Itmad-ud-dawlah. This tomb, like all others, is of red sandstone and marble and covered with mosaic work and we spent about half an hour going over it. Leaving there we recrossed the river Jumna and drove to the Fort and Palace. In general outline the fort is almost exactly like Delhi Fort, having been built by the same architect, and is equally imposing. The walls are of red sandstone, about 70 feet high and of immense thickness, the whole being surrounded

by a moat 30 feet wide and 35 feet deep. At the time of the Mutiny the Fort was immediately occupied by the British and was held without difficulty.

The Palace is built inside the Fort on the side facing the river and bears a strong resemblance to the one at Delhi, being if anything rather finer. We spent about an hour and a half going over it with the help of a local guide—even going down to the dungeons and underground execution chambers. The marble was everywhere beautifully carved, and inset with mosaic work, though, as at Delhi, all the silver and precious stones had been looted by the Maharajah of Bhartpur. The black marble throne and the site of the exhibition fights between elephants and tigers and other wild beasts were specially interesting.

After dinner we had the gharri round and set off for *the* sight of the trip—the Taj Mahal by moonlight. We had seen the Taj in the distance many times during the day and thus knew its general outline, but it was a vision never to be forgotten by moonlight. As we walked up the Arcade from the central gate the moon was well on our right and the portion facing us had a misty, shimmering appearance. The building itself is vast and built entirely of white marble set with mosaic work, the whole being flanked by four high minarets. We went inside and saw the tombs and after strolling round for half an hour we drove back to the hotel, turning in about 10.30 P.M.

7th January (*Sunday*). Breakfast at 9 A.M. and the gharri appeared about 10. This time we drove out to see the Taj by daylight. After having a good look through the building we climbed to the top of one of the minarets and had a fine view of the whole city of Agra. We were loth to go as we shall probably never see this place again. I

felt, moreover, in close communion with that Ralph[1] Fitch who travelled to Agra in 1585, armed with a letter from Queen Elizabeth to "The Most invincible and mighty prince, the Lord Zelabdim Akbar" and found Agra a city to be marvelled at and specially commended in his report.

Returning to the hotel we had an early lunch and left for Bombay by the 1.40 train. Dinner was at Jhansi about 7 P.M. and we turned in immediately afterwards. We had a fine view of Gwalior on the way down.

8th January (*Monday*). Turned out at 8 A.M. and breakfast at 9. Travelling solidly all day with occasional stops. We lost time early and were running late all day. It got noticeably hotter and more humid as we came South and by the time we arrived in Bombay a collar was a discomfort. Arrived Victoria Terminus at 6 P.M. and had our baggage conveyed to Apollo Bunder where we left it in charge of a coolie while we had our hair cut. On board to dinner at 7.15 P.M.

So ended the most interesting and least expensive journey that I have ever made. Those free railway passes had been a godsend to impecunious young officers.

[1] "The voyage of M. Ralph Fitch, marchant of London by way of Tripolis in Syria, to Ormus, and so to Goa in the East India, to Cambaia, and all the kingdome of Zelabdim Echebar the great Mogor, to the mighty river Ganges, and downe to Bengala, to Bacola, and Chonderi, to Pegu, to Imahay in the kingdome of Siam, and back to Pegu, and from thence to Malacca, Zeilan, Cochin, and all the coast of the East India: begunne in the year of our Lord 1583, and ended 1591, wherein the strange rites, maners, and customes of those people, and the exceeding rich trade and commodities of those counties are faithfully set downe and diligently described, by the aforesaid M. Ralph Fitch" (*Hakluyt's Voyages*, vol. 3, p. 281).

CHAPTER VII

BACK TO THE ATLANTIC FLEET

THE King and Queen re-embarked in the *Medina* just after noon on Wednesday, 10th January, 1912. His Majesty's last act before leaving Indian waters was to decorate the captains of the Escort Squadron, the Delhi Review party and the Royal Barge's crew—the two last being given the Durbar medal. At 6 P.M. the Squadron weighed and proceeded out of harbour in line ahead —*Medina*, *Cochrane*, *Defence*, *Argyll*, *Natal*.

At Aden, *Cochrane*, *Argyll* and *Natal* stopped to coal, *Medina* and *Defence* parting company with us and going on to Port Said. Shortly after passing through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb we met two Italian cruisers with lights out, though, as it was 1912 and not 1936, I do not suggest any sinister motive.

On Tuesday, 16th, we stopped engines for a burial at sea—a ship's steward of the *Cochrane*. On the 19th we passed through the Suez Canal by night, using our own searchlights for illumination, a somewhat weird experience. At Port Said I played hockey for the squadron and we ran over the local team to the tune of 12–0. At Malta on the 26th we were almost as badly beaten ourselves by the officers of the Mediterranean Fleet. We were not as fit as they were.

We found a French squadron in the Grand Harbour

at Valetta. I dined with some of our old midshipmen on board *Exmouth* and found a party of the Frenchmen there. We had a most riotous evening. I heard rather a good story about Sir Edmund Poë. In his capacity of Commander-in-Chief he gave several dances on board the flagship during the winter season, and to one of these he asked a party of Americans from a liner lying in the harbour. About midnight he told the band to play "God Save the King" and the American ladies tripped along to say good-bye. "Oh, Admiral Poe," said one of the most charming, "I have enjoyed myself; I do hope you will ask us again." To which the gallant Admiral replied, "Madam, although all my life I have been held at arm's length by men, and sat upon by women, my name is Poë."

Both the British and French fleets gave us a great send-off from Malta. It was much colder outside and a heavy sea running. On the 28th *Natal* was detached to take in tow a derelict which had been sighted. On the 30th we entered Gibraltar. We found the *Cumberland* in harbour and my Instructor brother dined with me in the gunroom—much to the joy of the midshipmen, whom he had instructed at Dartmouth and who were very devoted to him.

The weather continued bad all the way home and was particularly obnoxious in the Bay. On Sunday, 4th February, we anchored at Spithead in a blinding snowstorm and our escort duties were over. Two days later a memorial service of thanksgiving for Their Majesties' safe return was held in London. We, with two inches of snow on the upper deck and feeling the

cold terribly, went round to Plymouth and gave ten days' leave to each watch. On the first afternoon of my leave I went to the Scala Theatre in London and saw a colour film of the Durbar. It was the first colour film I had ever seen and quite a lot of people from the *Argyll* appeared in it. That night I went to *The Quaker Girl*, which was running at Daly's at the time; I felt quite emotional after it and have sung the song at intervals ever since.

On 4th March *Argyll* paid off and recommissioned. Quite a number of the wardroom officers and all the midshipmen stayed on, which pleased me greatly. I am conservative in my friends.

We went to Bantry to calibrate our guns—which we managed in the end, though the weather was as bad as it could be most of the time. We went round to Queenstown and there we gunroom officers had a great success. With our Battenberg Cup crew in training, we raced and beat the Captain's galley. It was like a team of amateur boxers or golfers beating a team of professionals. From Queenstown we went out to Gibraltar for gunnery. This time the Bay was purring like a sleepy cat.

Our new private oars arrived, from Ayling on the Thames, early in April. They were 18 feet 6 inches long and tremendously heavy compared with the ordinary service oars. I remember as a small boy how impressed I was with two oars, belonging to my eldest brother, who had been in his college crew at Cambridge, which were hung on the stairs and landing at our Essex home. One day, when home on leave, I measured

those oars and they seemed to have grown shorter. They were only about 12 feet long. They must have been pigmies at Cambridge.

On 17th April we embarked umpires and carried out Light Gunlayers' tests in Jeremiah's Anchorage; the following day we carried out Heavy Gunlayers' off Tangier. Results were not very good.

Then on the last Friday of the month came the great race for the Battenberg Cup. We had been training hard ever since we returned from India and were fighting fit. I had sat on the top of the boilers for hours and left a large wet patch behind me; I had skipped for hours; I had run round the decks till I was dizzy. I was No. 4 in that six-oared gig and I weighed just 12 stone. There were nine boats in and it was a terrific race from the start. The distance was one mile. We led all the way for about 1600 yards. Then "bow" collapsed, caught a crab, and jumped overboard. He was picked up half drowned by the steam pinnace astern. We went on with five oars for another hundred yards, still just leading. Then "stroke" collapsed and rolled into the bottom of the boat. We finished with four oars, the coxswain swearing worse than any trooper, and were beaten by 1 foot. We thought we had won, the cheering from the ships' companies was so terrific, and I shall never forget the bitter disappointment when we knew we had not. We were absolutely rowed out. "Bow" and "stroke" were carted off to hospital with bad hearts and we were two midshipmen short in the gunroom for some weeks. It was the *Formidable* who beat us, and the flagship, the *Prince of Wales*, was a bad third. Three days later

I played thirteen sets of tennis on one afternoon to show myself that I was keeping my pecker up.

My finances were now on a more healthy footing and relatively inexpensive luxuries were not entirely taboo. Three of us pooled resources and hired horses for occasional picnics into Spain, riding through La Linea and round the north end of Gibraltar Bay. There are some very fine cork woods in this district and two or three streams or *ventas* to cross. We usually crossed these *ventas* at the fords at a slow walk and did our galloping in between. One of our party, a wild Irishman, attempted to reverse the process and gallop through the stream. We went ahead to the further bank and then sat in our saddles to watch events. He arrived at the edge of the stream in a cloud of dust and small stones in fine style. Then his horse seemed to realise what was up, and refused. It stopped abruptly with its forelegs stretched wide apart. Our wild Irishman was catapulted out of the saddle into mid-stream and his horse turned, kicked up its heels and trotted off towards its stable in Gibraltar. We had the provisions, so we rode on; the Irishman, wet and hungry, walked six miles back to La Linea, where the Spanish customs officials had his horse in custody.

On one of these trips we made friends with an innkeeper who fried our *tortillas* (Spanish omelettes laced with garlic), and he showed us some of the secrets of the smuggling trade. He took us down to a cellar and exhibited half a dozen large dogs fitted with harness. It appeared that they lashed contraband tobacco under the brutes' bellies and ran them through the customs at night.

We were bitten with the idea of tramping to Granada and successfully negotiated with the Army Service Corps for the loan of a donkey, a tent and other necessities. We expected to be away a week (leave had been promised) and budgeted for an expenditure of £5 for the three of us. When we had pooled resources we found we could only raise £3. We took our capital to La Linea and tried to make £3 into £5 that way, but we lost it all and the walking-tour was cancelled.

In the middle of May we went into dry-dock and cricket became our chief amusement. I raised a gun-room team against the ship's company and we beat them by seven wickets. In other matches we had varying fortune. I never made a century, but I took all ten wickets of the *Mutine* for 50, and got eight for 64 and made 67 not out against the E.T.C.[1] I did not keep any record of my "duck's eggs".

Monday, 3rd June, was the King's birthday. The Governor of Algeciras came over in a Spanish cruiser and we all attended a big military review on the North Front. Later we took in 1200 tons of coal. The Admiralty yacht *Enchantress* arrived and we were inspected by Mr. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. It was the first time I had ever seen him; his most distinctive feature seemed to be a head literally bulging with brains. We then left Gibraltar for England at 16 knots, acting as escort to the *Enchantress*, and after a quiet and uneventful voyage, reached Portland early on Monday, 10th June. The Fleet Paymaster went on four days' leave and I was left in charge of his department

[1] Eastern Telegraph Company.

for the first time. Early in the following week we carried out our Torpedo Battle Practice, with good results, and then went to our home port, Plymouth, to give leave.

During this period a family tragedy happened. On Wednesday, 20th June, a letter from my mother reported my father as dangerously ill. I obtained immediate leave, left Plymouth at noon and arrived home at 8 P.M. He had been unconscious, but rallied and recognised me and was pathetically pleased; we had always been very close to each other. Next day a London surgeon operated for gastric ulcer. A telegram arrived from *Argyll* recalling me immediately. I travelled to London with the surgeon, who said there were reasonable chances of recovery. Travelling all night I reached Plymouth at 4.40 A.M. At breakfast-time a telegram arrived to say my father was dead. It was a terrible shock to me. He was only fifty-eight—the best type of country squire, with scientific leanings—the father of thirteen children; his whole life had been dedicated to the good of the county of Essex and our local town. His early death left a big gap in all our lives. I have never been satisfied that it was necessary to recall me to duty at such a time. A day or two later my eldest brother, from Dartmouth Naval College, came on board at 6 A.M. and spoke to me in my hammock before going on home for the funeral. I was overworked throughout the week, which was the best thing for me.

At the beginning of July the Home and Atlantic fleets collected at Spithead preliminary to annual man-

œuvres. Three hundred and thirty ships of all classes were present. On the 9th we were reviewed by the members of the House of Commons. That night we put to sea, bound for Cromarty Firth, and I went into four watches coding and decoding. From the 12th to the 15th we cruisers were spread on a line of patrol between Norway and Rosyth; an enemy submarine put down two of our destroyers. On the 15th we were enveloped in a thick fog which only lifted for short periods. The enemy attacked our line during the night and several ships on both sides were put out of action. Hard steaming at 21 knots. On the 16th we came to the conclusion that they had broken through during the night action and all cruisers swept to the northward all day at 20 knots. We sighted Norway but no enemy. On the 17th we turned southwards again and about breakfast-time on the 18th we sighted hostile ships in Filey Bay. They had landed 28,000 troops and escaped after we had chased them to the Wash. We seemed to have been outmanœuvred. They had made a successful raid and landed a large body of troops without being brought to action.

July was taken up for me with the examinations for the rank of Assistant Paymaster. I did better than I had dared hope, rising from thirteenth to fourth place on the seniority list of my entry, and securing the maximum of six months' accelerated promotion. The fact that I had secured three annual reports carrying 100 per cent marks was a great help. My eldest brother was almost more pleased about it than I was. "When you heard it, if you didn't sit back with a sigh of supreme content

and feel mighty pleased with yourself and about five years younger, you never will." I did. "You have only to mention it at the Admiralty when you want a little additional leverage for any billet you are after." I never did that.

The rest of the summer and autumn were taken up with gunnery and torpedo exercises off Portland and in the Moray and Cromarty firths. From Cromarty, in early September, four of us went up to run in a relay race at the Northern Meeting Games at Inverness and I nearly had a romance. At the end of my heat and in the act of passing on the baton to our No. 2, I stumbled and drove one of the long spikes of my running shoe into the inside of my knee. It ripped the muscle and I bled like a pig. I ran straight out of the ground looking for the brass plate of a surgeon or doctor. When I found one the doctor was at the games. However, his lovely daughter, who opened the door and saw my condition, said she could easily apply first aid—and she did so most efficiently. She then lent me a pair of her father's trousers and I attended a tea-party in the house. The attraction was mutual and she tried to persuade me to go to the Northern Ball in Inverness that night. I could hardly walk, however, and in any case I had not obtained leave from the ship beyond the last boat that night. A couple of cap ribbons next day finished the affair. I forget the result of the race but I remember the bonnie lassie.

We gave Christmas leave at the end of the year.

The opening of the year 1913 saw my position much

advanced. On my promotion to Assistant Paymaster [1] I became a commissioned officer and received a formal document to that effect signed by the King. As a commissioned officer I became entitled to a cabin but as there was a shortage I had to share one with an Executive Sub-Lieutenant. This was no hardship, and the comparative seclusion and privacy after three years of nakedness on the half-deck was immensely appreciated. Sharing a cabin also reduced expenses in the way of furnishings and gratuities to marine servants. My pay had risen from 4s. to 5s. a day and there were prospects—if only small ones—of something from my father's estate, though this was not to be touched while my mother was alive. I had celebrated my twenty-first birthday in the previous November, had accumulated an adequate wardrobe, uniform and civilian, and was altogether beginning to feel my feet. As Captain's Clerk I now had sufficient experience and weight to make the Captain's "paper" life easy for him.

We returned to Gibraltar at the end of January to refit, and stayed there till the beginning of March. We had been there so often that we felt quite at home by now. I had never, however, visited the famous Ramps, and one night, accompanied by the officer welter-weight champion of the Army and Navy, I settled my curiosity on that point. We had been primed with the story of a warrant officer who had disappeared from his ship for a week and then been found, stripped and robbed, on the North Front, and it came out at the court-martial that he had been doped up the Ramps and

[1] Now Paymaster Sub-Lieutenant.

carried out there in a sack when they had no further use for him. Perhaps we were unduly nervous: it was a pretty awful place. At any rate, at the first sign of an attempt to drag us into a house by force we hit out and hit hard and, running the gauntlet of a fire of miscellaneous objects thrown at us from upper windows, we escaped with only minor injuries and pure minds. We had enjoyed the scrap.

I was wine caterer at the time and had evolved an excellent method of satisfying any longing for alcohol and keeping my wine bill down (as a commissioned officer over twenty-one I was allowed £2 a month). I would take a friend up to Saccone & Speed's and let it be known that I was ordering several dozen bottles of sherry for the mess, but that I was rather particular about quality. In a twinkling six wine glasses would be placed in front of each of us and we solemnly sampled the various brands. A cigar or the best cigarettes assisted the ceremony. Having given our order we would brush aside the suggestions of the proprietor that we wanted other wines; but two or three days later, our palates unpolluted, we would return to taste his ports, his brandies or his liqueurs. It was the wine caterer's privilege and I exercised it to the full. I also achieved an utterly spurious reputation in the mess for being a great authority on wines. It amuses me to think of how I bolstered up that reputation by talking of our wine cellars at home, of the dust-covered bottles and the walnuts underneath, and of how we killed the rats with hockey-sticks by lantern light. There was more than a grain of truth in it, too.

The usual games went on, and during this period I played, accidentally, my first game of rugger. I had gone out to the North Front to watch the Army play the Navy and the Navy were found to be one short. Their captain came across and asked me to fill the vacancy. I protested that I knew nothing about the game, having never played it, and did not even know the rules. He said that would be all right; I was fast and must play outside three-quarter. So I made a hasty change into someone else's gear and played. After about ten minutes the ball was slung out to me and I ran like a hare. Seeing I was cornered I stopped and threw the ball with a fine water-polo action right against the corner flag. I was delighted but the referee was not. He said it was a deliberate throw forward and that if I did it again he would order me off. So next time the ball came out I just ran straight ahead like a bull and refused to throw. An Army sergeant tackled me round the waist but I still ran on, more slowly. When he climbed on to my shoulders I slightly increased speed. As we neared the line he put his hand round and pressed my nose flat against my face. I dropped that ball with a howl and turned round to hit him, but my eyes were so full of tears that I couldn't see. Then they put me in among the forwards and at half-time the proper man turned up.

In May the Third Cruiser Squadron regatta took place. Did I mention that the cruiser squadrons had been reconstituted after we returned from India, and that we had left the company of the *Drake*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, and *Black Prince* in the Fifth Cruiser

Squadron and joined with the *Devonshire*, *Roxburgh* and *Antrim* in the Third? The results of the regatta were so remarkable that I must let them speak for themselves:

Boat	*Ratings*	*Distance*	*1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*
Gig	Signal-men	1 mile	Devon-shire	Roxburgh	Antrim
Cutter	Ordinary seamen	2 ,,	Argyll	Antrim	Devon-shire
Whaler	Daymen	1 ,,	,,	,,	Roxburgh
Gig	Officers	1 ,,	,,	Devon-shire	,,
Skiff	Warrant officers	½ ,,	Antrim	Argyll	Antrim
Cutter	Marines	2 ,,	Argyll	Devon-shire	Roxburgh
Whaler	Stokers	1 ,,	,,	,,	Antrim
Gig	E.R.A.'s*	1 ,,	Roxburgh	Argyll	,,
Pinnace	Ordinary seamen	1½ ,,	Antrim	,,	Roxburgh
Cutter	Seamen	2 ,,	Argyll	Roxburgh	Argyll
Gig	Petty officers	1 ,,	,,	,,	Devon-shire
Cutter	Stokers	2 ,,	,,	,,	,,
Gig	Seamen	2 ,,	,,	Devon-shire	Argyll
Skiff	Veterans	½ ,,	,,	Antrim	Antrim
Whaler	Band ..	1 ,,	Antrim	Argyll	Devon-shire
Cutter	Boys	1½ ,,	Argyll	Devon-shire	Antrim
Gig	Marines	1 ,,	Roxburgh	,,	Argyll
Skiff	Officers	½ ,,	Argyll	Antrim	Antrim

* Engine Room Artificers.

At the conclusion of the regatta the Rear-Admiral Commanding Third Cruiser Squadron made the following signal to *Argyll*:

"R.A. congratulates Captain, officers and ship's company on their splendid success in the regatta today, due to their good training and organisation."

She was a remarkable ship. In September I left her on appointment to H.M.S. *Defence*, flagship of the First Cruiser Squadron in the Mediterranean.

A.П.Ф.

CHAPTER VIII

CRUISER FLAGSHIP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

THE appointment to H.M.S. *Defence* marked a complete change in my duties. In the *Argyll* I had served as Captain's Clerk in turn to Captain Michael Culme-Seymour and Captain V. H. G. Bernard, my two years and nine months in that ship being divided almost equally between them. In the *Defence* I worked in the ship's office, directly under the Fleet Paymaster, and became almost wholly immersed in pay, victualling, clothing and stores. Much of the colour went out of my official life, but it was very necessary that I should become well versed in the real duties of an Accountant Officer unless I had ideas of specialising as a Secretary, and my captains were so comparatively junior that there seemed little immediate prospect of that. In any case, there was still one set of examinations in the years to come and I must have the complete training to be able to pass them. My hours of duty became more regular, I could plan ahead, and I settled down in the gunroom, where we were a very large mess, determined to enjoy myself, free from responsibility or anxiety.

September was a good time to go to Malta. The worst of the hot weather was just passing, the winter social season was just commencing, the "fishing fleet" was

reported on the horizon. This last was the somewhat unkind designation given to the marriageable ladies who migrated to the island every autumn and back to England every spring. The six months of the winter season were supposed to offer them every possible opportunity of getting "off the shelf". There were large numbers of bachelors in the garrison and the Fleet, but during that last winter before the War the number was greatly reduced—usually to the scoffing amusement of messmates and the superior smiles of those already spliced. Personally I owed a profound debt of gratitude to these ladies; I was early taken in tow by two sisters and never lacked feminine society during the whole of that winter, and was a not-too-happy bachelor when we parted in the spring. The "fishing fleet" was a social asset and genuinely popular with us all.

Rear-Admiral Ernest T. Troubridge, who commanded the First Cruiser Squadron and had his quarters in the *Defence*, was an enthusiastic lover of grand opera and had a private box reserved at the Opera House throughout the season. Almost invariably, when he could not go himself, he offered the box to the wardroom or gunroom mess and I never missed such a chance. Either as the Admiral's guest or in cheap seats with gunroom friends, I must have heard grand opera on an average once a week; which meant, of course, that I saw some of the operas over and over again. I never tired of *Rigoletto*, *Carmen* or *La Bohème*. The Italian companies which performed the works were very fine —some of the soloists quite outstanding. It was said that a tenor, for instance, who had finished his training

and toured Italy with success, must pass the critics at Malta before he graduated to the Royal Opera House at Milan.

I never danced so much in all my life as I did at Malta that year. We had dances on board the various ships of the Fleet, dances at the regimental barracks ashore, and an occasional masked ball run by civilians at the Opera House on Saturday nights. We went to these last in masks and dominoes, the women in masks and fancy dress, and I remember one of them particularly well. I had been much attracted during the evening by a fine-looking girl dancing with a tall dark fellow who, I thought, was our padre, but I was not quite sure. I kept them in sight and sure enough at 11.55 P.M. her cavalier said a fond farewell. As a parson he must leave before midnight. At that hour we all unmasked and my judgment had not been at fault; the lady was ravishing. I danced with her for two hours and then saw her home. She asked me who I was, and I said I would tell if she would give me the name of the man with whom she had danced before midnight.

"Oh," she said, "he told me; he is the Assistant Paymaster in the *Defence*."

That was a nasty one for me, but the padre was a great friend of mine.

"Well," I said, "I'm the chaplain of the *Defence* but you must never tell anyone, because padres are not allowed out after midnight on Saturdays, and certainly don't see ladies home at two o'clock on Sunday mornings. However, will you join a tea-party in my cabin on Tuesday afternoon?"

She agreed, and was to bring a friend, and I returned on board.

At breakfast-time I met the chaplain, looking very holy and with a liver.

"Well, padre," I said, "I am surprised. I saw you kissing a girl good-bye at two o'clock this morning in Strada Mezzodi and I'm going to join the tea-party you are giving in your cabin on Tuesday afternoon."

I did—and he paid for it!

He was a good fellow—that padre. He joined a clay-pipe club which I formed—limited to him and me, a Sub-Lieutenant and one of the Secretary's Clerks. We bought clay pipes with the inscription, "Ye old Yakob", on the bowl and swore that we would smoke them till they were absolutely black. Then three of us secretly soaked neat rum into the bowls and they browned in half a day. The Secretary's Clerk, who was a most lovable fellow but rather slow, was jealous of our results and crawled under a turret and smoked and smoked, with the only result that he was violently sick. Then the padre's conscience pricked him and he let the cat out of the bag.

We were a large mess in the gunroom and a lively one. One night eighteen of us went ashore and took down all the street signs in Valetta, and brought them back to decorate the gunroom mess. We invited other gunrooms over to see us and they much admired the idea. Then, one day, the president of the mess was sent for by the Admiral. He found all the other presidents of gunroom messes there. The Admiral read a letter from the Governor saying all the street signs in Valetta had

disappeared, that he was very angry about it, that he had enquired of the Army without result and that, most regretfully, he felt the Navy must be responsible. The Admiral said he was certain his young officers would never do such a thing, but if by any chance they had, and could replace them within twenty-four hours, he would undertake that nothing more should be heard of it. Otherwise there would be serious trouble. I think he knew who had done it, all right. But it was not easy to get those signs back on their walls. Twenty of us landed for the job and we had worked out the drill beforehand. Six formed a human ladder and two swarmed up it with the sign, a hammer, and long nails. Others were disposed in doorways round about. When the inevitable Maltese policeman approached out jumped a scout, knocked his helmet over his eyes, and ran off in the opposite direction with the policeman in hot pursuit. When we finally knocked the last nail into the last sign about two o'clock in the morning, we heard whistles blowing, and feet running in nearly every street in Valetta. No one was caught and we all got back safely, but it was a close shave in several cases.

Luckily the Maltese policemen are a very good lot and extremely friendly to the junior Navy. I suspect our Metropolitan police would be the same in similar circumstances. It isn't a tip they are after, though in those days they would not refuse one if it were offered in the right way. I remember passing through Malta a year or two later, depositing my luggage and forgetting the name of my hotel. It was an easy thing to do, as I had called at several hotels before finding a vacant room.

THE GUNROOM COALING PARTY

THE CLAY-PIPE CLUB

Α.Π.Θ.

Later I dined out with some Army officers and returned rather the worse for wear. I stopped a policeman and explained the position. We walked all round Valetta arm-in-arm asking night porters whether I belonged to them, and when at last I was claimed it was within five yards of where I had met the bobby. There must have been something of the homing pigeon in my make-up. Next day when I saw him in a quiet street and slipped five shillings into his hand, he said, "I don't recognise you, sir, but I shall be pleased to drink your health". What art!

Malta, and particularly Valetta, has not changed much, I should imagine, since the time of the Crusades. It was the headquarters of the Knights of Malta in those days and the great centre of Christian endeavour against the infidels and pirates of the Mediterranean Sea. From the Knights of Malta it was taken by Count Roger the Norman, who in turn lost it to Charles V. The latter presented it to the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. About thirty years later Suleiman the Magnificent and a great Turkish army nearly succeeded in conquering it. However, the Knights just managed to hold out, and indeed remained in possession till it was finally lost by treachery to the French in 1798. We captured it in 1800. Most of the original buildings, including the great walls and bastions, still remain. Entering the Grand Harbour from the sea the impression is one of enormous strength. It has been the principal base for our Mediterranean Fleet for more than a century and must be one of the most valuable strategic positions which we hold. At the same time it is no use

blinking the fact that the population is not English. In language and religion they are more akin to the Italians than ourselves, and if ever the Fleet were withdrawn I imagine the position would be very difficult. In 1913 the Fleet brought wealth to Malta and the island flourished on the dockyard and the ships. The shopkeepers never refused credit and never forgot a name or a face; the man from whom I bought my boots knew more about my naval brother than I knew myself.

We gunroom officers loved the island and that year of 1913–1914 was one constant round of gaiety and sport. The opera and dances I have already mentioned; in addition there was the Amateur Dramatic Society and the Union Club; there was cricket and hockey and football on the Corradino, golf and tennis and polo on the Marsa, water polo in the Grand Harbour, bathing at Tigne Bay, and boat-pulling to our hearts' content. Among the officers of the *Defence* we had one of the strongest cricket teams ever seen on the island. Going in second wicket down I had an average of 40 because I seldom had time to get out before we declared. One of our lieutenants made six centuries in succession and two other Navy bats came between him and my humble self. The pitches of the Navy were on gravel on the Corradino, those of the Army on the Marsa and on grass. We were each invincible on our own territory. Those who have played cricket on matting stretched on concrete one week and have had to play the return match on grass will know what I mean.

Amusing things happened, of course. I remember entering for a Fleet golf competition and going with a

senior midshipman to the Marsa Club to see the draw. "Good God," I cried, pretending to swoon, "I'm drawn against the senior Captain in the Fleet!" "And very nice, too," said a voice behind me. "I expect we shall have a very good game. Come to lunch with me on Sunday and we'll play at 2 P.M." We did. He gave me a wonderful lunch and he won. I had not got a very strong head in those days.

One night three of us went to the Union Club to dine. We hired a one-horse *karotze* (cab) to drive us back to the Custom House steps. Being merry, the senior member of the party, a big round Engineer-Lieutenant, put the driver inside with me, and himself took the reins, with his bosom friend upon the box beside him. He drove full gallop down Calcara Hill and straight into the harbour. Half-way down that hill I had jumped out. When I arrived upon the scene the Engineer-Lieutenant was solemnly diving down and trying to get through the window of the *karotze* to find the cabby, whom he fondly imagined to be still inside. That sensible man had jumped out after me. Next day it cost us £7 to stay legal proceedings for damage to the *karotze* and harness and straining the horse's back.

On the steps up from the harbour to Strada Reale there was the famous iron ring in the wall. It was firmly believed that whoever climbed through that ring would be promoted within the year. In the summer of 1914 I, being long and slim, climbed through and was unexpectedly promoted early in the following year; the big round Engineer-Lieutenant got stuck and we had to pull him out by his feet. He never got his brass hat.

One mad thing I did which nearly cost me my life. For a bet of 5s. I covenanted to swim from Fort St. Angelo, out of the Grand Harbour, across the entrance to Sliema harbour, to Tigne Bay, and back, without touching boat or ground. I left the ship at 1 P.M. in a sirocco and a nasty sea. The boat which was to have accompanied me became waterlogged and had to return. At 9 o'clock that night, frozen to the marrow and half drowned, I crept up the starboard gangway and disappeared below. I had won my bet but I had been reported missing hours before and the searchlights and boom defence had been trying in vain to pick me up. I got into trouble with the Commander for that. The Navy could do what it liked, but in this case the military had been informed.

And so it went on. Valetta and the Grand Harbour were the centre of our life and most of that year was spent in their vicinity. Gunnery and torpedo exercises took us away for a time and the autumn and spring cruises made very pleasant breaks.

We visited Port Said and I was given the choice of Cairo and the Pyramids or playing for the Squadron against the locals at every known game—and I chose the latter. It sounds a poor choice but I imagined there would be opportunities of seeing the Pyramids when I had grown up. Actually I have never been there since. We played against the Army at golf on the desert course and I did a hole in one and lost it. I drove rather wildly and could not find my ball. The couple behind found it in the tin. There was a discussion in the club afterwards as to whether I must stand drinks all round,

but on my showing a large patch in the seat of my trousers they let me off. Three of us wanted to see a can-can, the authentic kind, and went into the native quarter at night. We gave the old woman 5s. apiece—all we had. She said the girls could not dance on beer. We said we could not afford champagne. Some big niggers slouched in at the door at that point so we laid one out and hurt two more. Then we ran for it and were chased for half a mile. We never saw the can-can.

In Naples Bay we landed at Castellamare and explored Pompeii. We saw some extraordinary relics in the museums there. We went into places where no woman is allowed. We were told that one dressed up as a man and got away with it. We wondered whether she was disappointed. We went into the Grotta Azzurra at Capri. We climbed Vesuvius, and were surprised by a small eruption and ran half-way home.

In Phalerum Bay we were inspected by the King of Greece and afterwards went to Athens and saw the temples of the gods. At Corfu we visited the Emperor of Germany's palace and we shot duck off Ostia and Cephalonia.

At Venice we stayed fully a week and for the whole of that period the weather was cold and stormy. We did not see Venice at her best. The local clubs put up gold medals for competition among the Squadron and I captained the *Defence*'s team. We were playing the *Warrior* at soccer and might have won but one of our men was fouled and hit a Warrior hard. I ordered him off and his pal Bill went off also. I resigned the captaincy when I returned on board. That night Bill was brought aft

by the rest of the team to apologise and he looked as though he had had a rough time. We took a team of nine rugger players and two soccer players to Padua to play the University at soccer and the rugger players were surprised when we were beaten. We deserved it. Those Italians played the game very well and we should at least have chosen a proper team. It did our prestige no good to fool about like that. We gave a big evening "at home" in the flagship and lost most of our mess silver as souvenirs. One of the old boys put two cream éclairs in his tail-pocket "for the bambini", and the midshipmen of the boat said he was very unhappy when she rolled and he got flattened out. That affair cost us a lot of money, which we felt the Admiralty or the Foreign Office should have paid. We had no proper mess traps for months to come.

June 1914 found us at Durazzo.

CHAPTER IX

DURAZZO; THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

To explain the reason for *Defence* being suddenly ordered to Durazzo in the summer of 1914, it is necessary to give, in broad outline, the position regarding Albania at that time.

In 1912 the First Balkan War had broken out. To the amazement of Europe, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece had combined to crush Turkey in Europe and, perhaps even more to the general surprise, they had succeeded. Many reasons have been assigned for this war but there is little doubt the real end in view was the partition of Albania and Macedonia. The latter province entirely disappeared as such, and was incorporated into the territories of the three victorious states. Albania only escaped a similar fate by the diplomatic intervention of Austria and Italy. These two powers, though jealous of each other, were at one in their determination to resist the encroachment of the Slavs, and they combined to threaten Serbia and to guarantee the integrity of Albania. Germany supported the views of her allies, and Russia, the backer of Serbia, was forced to stand aside and see that pushful little country robbed of an outlet to the sea. Serbian troops who, after suffering incredible hardships in a winter campaign in the mountains, had reached and occupied San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo,

were ordered back and had no option but to obey. Scutari, held by Essad Pasha and 10,000 men, successfully resisted a siege of several months by Serbians and Montenegrins. In the south Greece had been more successful and occupied southern Epirus, which she was allowed to retain. With that exception Albanian territory remained untouched and the Albanian question, an opportunity for the final settlement of which the Great Powers had missed, had assumed its old importance in European politics. Finally it had been decided to set up an independent principality, the crown being offered to and accepted by Prince William of Wied. The Prince had made Durazzo his capital and for some weeks all had gone well. Italian and Serbian propaganda, however, soon triumphed in a country where money is worshipped as a god, and the Prince was besieged by the revolting tribesmen. His own Minister of War, the notorious Essad Pasha, had gone over to the other side. The contingents sent by the Great Powers to occupy Scutari at the end of the Balkan War rendered that city safe; but Durazzo was invested and the rest of the country had thrown off all restraint. Albania was in the melting-pot again.

An International Squadron was assembled off Durazzo towards the middle of June, to "demonstrate" the official unity of the Great Powers in support of the Prince, one ship each being sent by Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria and Russia. We were anchored about two miles off the shore and Rear-Admiral Troubridge was in nominal command.

I do not know exactly what orders the Admiral

received, the general impression being that we were to take no active part in the defence of the town; but, apart from that, we were to see that no harm befell the Prince and Princess of Wied. This necessitated the immediate organisation of landing parties—for the defence of the royal palace in case of necessity. On quiet days the landing parties remained in the ships; whenever unusually heavy firing was heard they were rushed ashore. There they occupied specially prepared defence posts in the main streets. As heavy firing broke out at frequent intervals, and usually at night, we were kept in a pleasant fever of movement and excitement during the whole six weeks we were there.

I had no part in the measures for defence but, as a paymaster, I was directly concerned with obtaining fresh provisions for the ship, and this necessitated my landing three or four times a week. Once ashore I was free to roam, much as I pleased. The line of trenches occupied by the defence had been dug on a piece of flat country about a mile outside the town; I went there on several occasions. No enemy was to be seen: they made themselves scarce in daylight. I found the local troops, led by a Dutch Commandant, armed with the most weird-looking firearms—old muzzle-loaders, shotguns with enormously long barrels, rifles of the pre-Boer War type and even pistols with butts studded with precious stones. I had some target practice with them and found the Gendarmerie exceedingly bad shots. They thought I was a marvel when I broke plates at about one hundred yards. I imagined the casualties in daylight would be very light; at night, of course,

anything might happen. The fortress artillery consisted for the most part of old saluting pieces dating from Napoleon's day. They at least made a lot of noise.

Soon after we arrived the inevitable accident happened, and the Dutch Commandant of Gendarmerie was killed. Eight officers from each ship were nominated to attend the funeral. A hitch occurred at the start because the Austrians objected to walking with the Prussians and asked to be allowed to walk with us. There was no love lost between the Austrian and German navies.

The Austrian regard for us was indeed quite touching. Just before we left, an Austrian naval Lieutenant asked me to share the last bottle of beer in Durazzo with him. He had given five crowns for it. After we had gone through the usual formalities, I asked him why he had chosen me. "To show you," he said, "that we Austrians love the English. The international situation looks pretty bad at present but our navies have never fought and we ardently hope they never will."

I always had an interpreter with me when ashore—a local rascal—and one day he asked me whether I would like to meet Prenck (Prince) Bib Doda. I said I would, but who was he? Bib Doda, it appeared, was the head of one of the Catholic tribes, and when we met over a cup of Turkish coffee I noticed that he had only one eye. He told me the following remarkable story.

The Treaty of San Stefano, which in 1878 concluded the war between Russia and Turkey, allocated a great part of Albanian territory to Montenegro and Bulgaria. Prenck Bib Doda was at that time the Chief of the Mirdite Catholics and he organised one of the few real

coalitions of the Northern Albanian tribes to fight against this settlement. For more than two years the fighting went on and so successful were Bib Doda and his insurgents that, in the end, they got their way and preserved their independence. Soon after the settlement the Turkish Government, uneasy as to the results of the Union of the Catholics, successfully carried out a typical *coup de main*. Under the guise of friendship, Bib Doda was inveigled on board a Turkish man-of-war. In spite of his "safe conduct" he was put in chains and carried off to Constantinople, where he was kept a prisoner for seventeen years. At the end of that time the Sultan, considering that the time when he could be troublesome had passed, sent for him and informed him that he could purchase his freedom for 10,000 francs down. The Albanian pleaded poverty and inability to produce such wealth. "That's all right", said the Sultan, and instructed the guards to take him away and put out his left eye. This was done. After a suitable interval the prisoner was again haled before the Sultan and the offer repeated. Again he said he could not raise the money. "All right," said the Sultan, "take him away and put out his other eye." Before the sentence could be carried into effect the Prenck capitulated and the ransom was duly paid—though he told me that it nearly ruined his tribe to find the money. It might be as well to add that to me Prenck Bib Doda with one eye appeared as capable of mischief, were he so minded, as had been the Prenck Bib Doda with two eyes thirty-four years before.

The Albanian tribesman is a fine healthy specimen,

covered with weapons, evidently imbued with a strong love of fighting and a profound hatred of manual labour. As a result he depends chiefly on his womenkind to do all the work and support the home, his idea being that he does more than his share in protecting it. The women plough and sow and reap, and convert the result of their labours into bread; the man looks on and fills the post of superintending adviser when all goes well; a Nemesis when anything goes wrong. As a result the Albanian woman ages quickly; married at any time after the age of fourteen, she loses her youth and good looks soon after twenty; she develops quickly from a lovely girl into a heavy, thick-set woman, usually with the cares of the upbringing of a large family wholly dependent upon herself. Under these circumstances little thought is given to the future and nothing put by for the rainy day. A bad harvest, or an exceptionally hard winter, finds the people destitute and heavy mortality is the inevitable result.

As an illustration of the value of our money to the Albanian I must repeat a true story told me by a famous Englishwoman, Miss Edith Durham, whom I met at the hospital on one of my visits there. She had been doing Red Cross work in Montenegro and Albania during the Balkan wars, and was in the habit of travelling up and down the country entirely alone except for her native manservant or groom. Everywhere she met with chivalrous treatment (she deserved it) and was never molested in any way. After a while a story got abroad that she had a private income of 150 francs a year. She told me she received ten offers of marriage from

prominent Albanians within a fortnight. A little later the news flashed round that she was far richer than at first thought; her income was not 150 francs but 150 sterlini (English pounds) a year. A miniature gold rush took place and she was besieged with offers of marriage from all over the country, some of her suitors travelling over a hundred miles to lay their hearts at her feet. She told me another story of her servant and of the secret bag which he carried, and of the ears and noses which it contained, but perhaps that is hardly germane to this journal.

In my diary for 28th July I have a note that a half-hearted attack on Durazzo was made by the insurgents late on the previous night, and that firing was very fierce for about an hour; that we had some water polo and boxing practice during the dog watches; and that *Grampus* arrived from Malta with mails about 6 P.M. and *Raccoon* sailed. But more important is a note that the Mediterranean Fleet had sailed from Alexandria for Malta rather earlier than expected owing to the black political outlook. Also I have a note that a Press message stated Austria had declared war on Serbia at 6 P.M. the previous evening, to which I added the following comment: "Personally I have enjoyed our six-weeks stay here but a change would buck us all up. The chances of localising the Austro-Serbian conflict appear very small in view of the feeling in Russia, and the fact that Austrians, Russians, French and Germans are all mobilising. A European war would certainly clear the air a bit."

On Wednesday, 29th July, we shifted our position to a berth one mile further from the shore, where there was room to lie at a single anchor. We had received orders to be prepared to leave Durazzo in a hurry, and getting under way with a single anchor down takes less than half the normal time. We were very good friends with the German and Austrian ships, and their officers had dined with us on more than one cheery occasion; but lying between them, as we had been doing for six weeks, within point-blank torpedo range of either, was not considered to be a healthy position in the existing state of affairs. I landed with English money to settle all our local bills for fresh provisions and found everything quiet on shore. One of our seamen died of enteric; it was the first death of the commission and cast quite a gloom over the ship, whilst the doctors were worried about the source of infection and whether it would spread.

At 3 A.M. on 30th July we received an urgent message from the Commander-in-Chief to proceed forthwith to Malta. We were under way in twenty minutes; silently and without lights we stole out of that dangerous harbour. We wondered what our German, Austrian and Italian friends would think of our sudden departure when the dawn revealed our empty berth. At 9.30 A.M. we stopped our engines and buried the able seaman, then continued on our way at over 21 knots. Preliminary steps were taken to prepare the ship for action. All store-rooms touching the ship's side were re-stowed, with a clearance of about two feet to enable holes to be stopped. All unnecessary gear was prepared for landing. We went to night-defence stations so as to be

prepared for any possible attack before we were clear of Italian waters. The news bulletin reported Consols down three points in spite of Government buying; all countries seemed to be mobilising.

We reached Malta just after midnight on Friday, 31st July, passed through the recently rigged boom defences, and secured to our usual buoy in the Grand Harbour. We commenced coaling at 9 A.M.—one of the dirtiest I remember—and had taken in 1120 tons by 4 P.M. During the afternoon I sorted out my private kit and prepared it for landing, retaining a tin case full of white uniform and linen only. If there was a war it would surely be over before the winter! The Press stated that Italy was disinclined to support Austria against Serbia; if that were true it was very important.

On Saturday, 1st August, we went into dry-dock to clean and repaint the ship's bottom. It would make a great difference to our speed, of course. The hands were hard at it all day and night taking in ammunition and provisions. The ship had not yet been cleaned after coaling and was in a dreadful mess. All ships painted out their funnel markings to confuse recognition. We had news that the French Fleet was concentrated at Bizerta, convoying their African troops, the Italians being concentrated at Brindisi and the Austrians at Cattaro. Most people on board seemed to think that Germany was bluffing and we in the gunroom were very worried lest it should all end in smoke. After all, we and the Germans had dined together at Durazzo a fortnight before and drunk to "Der Tag" with the utmost sincerity and good feeling on either side.

Sunday, 2nd August, was treated as an ordinary week-day owing to the large amount of urgent work still to be done. We undocked at 8 A.M. and carried on provisioning and ammunitioning all the forenoon. At 2 P.M. a signal from the C.-in-C. ordered the First Cruiser Squadron, the battle cruisers *Indefatigable* and *Indomitable*, the light cruisers *Gloucester* and *Chatham* and two divisions of destroyers to proceed to sea, under the orders of Rear-Admiral Troubridge, for an unknown destination. We passed through the boom defences at 9 P.M. and went to night-defence stations. I started work with others, including the padre, in the Intelligence and Coding office in three watches. The channel was carefully swept for mines before we went out of harbour and evidently no precautions were to be neglected. At about 9.40 P.M. we got an urgent signal from the C.-in-C. saying that the Admiralty regarded the situation as very critical. We were to be prepared to meet a surprise attack and were to keep the destroyers with us and remain concentrated while on passage.

The orders to proceed to sea had been quite unexpected and we had several people on shore; by hoisting the Blue Peter and firing a gun we had managed to get everyone off by 5 P.M. At 2.30 P.M. a coal-lighter had come alongside to take all spare private gear to the dockyard. We formed a special gunroom working-party and handled all our own stuff. I shall never forget how we sweated, manhandling our heavy sea chests up the iron ladders and through the hatches. There were many abrasions but no serious hurts. That done, we felt we were really stripped for the fray.

H.M.S. *DEFENCE* PROCEEDING TO SEA: MALTA, 1914

THE FIRST CRUISER SQUADRON AT SEA

А.П.Ф.

At 4 A.M. on Monday, 3rd August, we thought the fun had started. "Action stations" were sounded off, but it turned out to be for exercise only—to return live ammunition to the magazine and pack up night defence. It appeared that we had been sent to sea to search for the German battle cruiser *Goeben* and the light cruiser *Breslau*, which, if found, we were to keep in sight and be ready to attack should war be declared. In connection with this scheme the destroyers were sent to patrol the mouth of the Adriatic; the First Cruiser Squadron patrolled north and south on longitude 19° E. in support; *Chatham* watched the northern entrance to the Straits of Messina; and *Indefatigable* and *Indomitable* were detached and proceeded west to search for *Goeben*. *Inflexible*, with the C.-in-C., remained at Malta till the position clarified itself. At 6.21 A.M. he made a signal to us to "prepare for battle", but the day passed quietly.

All day Tuesday, 4th August, our Squadron patrolled on the same north-and-south line. At about 5 P.M. we stopped engines and hove overboard all furniture and gear which had been dismantled during the past two days and which we had been unable to land. Even the doors were removed from the officers' latrines and were replaced by canvas curtains. We heard afterwards that the Austrians reported the *Warrior* sunk by a mine, because one of their merchant ships picked up an armchair stamped with her name. *Black Prince* joined up. She had been detached to convey Lord Kitchener from Marseilles to Egypt—his journey being cancelled at the last moment. Her arrival made the

First Cruiser Squadron complete—*Defence*, *Warrior*, *Duke of Edinburgh* and *Black Prince*. *Gloucester* was despatched to watch the south-eastern entrance to the Straits of Messina. During the forenoon the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were reported to have bombarded Philippeville and Bona—on the French African coast—and we imagined that our battle cruisers were fairly close up. From the Press message we learned that Germany had invaded French territory and infringed Belgian neutrality; there could surely be no drawing back now. The odds on war shortened in the gunroom. Italy declared her neutrality.

About 7.40 P.M. we received a message from the C.-in-C. to say the British ultimatum to Germany would expire at midnight G.M.T. Hostilities would commence after that time on receipt of a telegram. *Inflexible* would join *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* to the westward, picking up *Chatham* and *Weymouth* on the way. The First Cruiser Squadron and *Gloucester* were to remain on watch at the entrance to the Adriatic and were not to get seriously engaged with superior forces. The destroyers were to return to the Greek coast. *Goeben* and *Breslau* were forty miles west of the island of Maritimo (at the western end of Sicily) at 5 P.M. and were steering to the eastward—having been followed at full speed from Bona by *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable*. At present there was no declaration of war against Austria.

In view of subsequent events, the most important part of that message was that the First Cruiser Squadron was *not to get seriously engaged with superior forces*.

The declaration of war, which I decoded myself, was felt to be inevitable, and was received throughout the ship with great joy. It read as follows:

"Admiralty to all ships. Urgent. Commence hostilities at once against Germany. (2300.)"

This message was followed by another, which read:

"Admiralty to all ships. The following telegram has been addressed by H.M. the King to Admiral Sir John Jellicoe for communication to all H.M. ships. Begins. At this grave moment in our nation's history I send to you and through you to the officers and men of the Fleet of which you have assumed command the assurance of my confidence that under your direction they will revive and renew the old glory of the Royal Navy and prove once again the sure shield of Britain and her Empire in the hour of trial. Ends."

CHAPTER X

THE *GOEBEN* AND *BRESLAU*

VERY soon after the commencement of hostilities, news of the capture of German merchant ships commenced to come in. During the forenoon of the 5th August we passed an Austrian Lloyd liner and made her follow astern for about an hour before releasing her; we thought war might be declared on Austria at any moment. She signalled "good luck" on departure! For the rest of the day we steamed on a line of bearing about thirty miles from Santa Maura Island in the hope that, if we sighted *Goeben*, we might draw her into narrow waters and fight her at our range.

The Austrian Fleet was reported at Venice, and later the *Goeben* and *Breslau* in the Straits of Messina. *Indomitable* and the two destroyers *Savage* and *Rattlesnake* were coaling at Bizerta. *Inflexible*, *Indefatigable*, *Chatham* and *Weymouth* were patrolling between Bizerta and Sardinia. We were informed that the Malta defences were mobilised and that all private stocks of coal had been taken over for the use of H.M. ships. We were also told that the lights in the Dardanelles had been extinguished by Turkey, who had declared herself a neutral. Italy was sitting on the fence.

At 7 A.M. on Thursday, 6th August, we received

Emery Walker Ltd. sc

А.П.О.

information that the German ship *Waltraute*, loaded with coal and grain, had left Alexandria for Brindisi on 3rd August. The squadron was therefore spread to intercept her. At 6 P.M. we received information that *Goeben* and *Breslau* had left the Straits of Messina by the south-eastern entrance and that *Gloucester* was shadowing them. There was intense excitement on board when the C.-in-C. ordered the First Cruiser Squadron to cut her off if possible and to fight her during the dark hours of the night. We went to action stations and stayed there till 4 A.M., when Rear-Admiral Troubridge signalled the C.-in-C. to say that, being only able to meet *Goeben* outside the range of our guns and inside hers, he had abandoned the chase. The disappointment on board *Defence* was intense.

What had happened was as follows. When the *Goeben* and *Breslau* went into Messina to coal it was known they could not remain very long, or they would be interned, but it was not known by which entrance they would emerge. If they decided to do as much damage as they could and attack the French transports carrying the African troops to France, they might seriously affect the war on land. Afterwards they might conceivably have escaped from the Mediterranean by the Strait of Gibraltar and preyed on the trade routes or found their way back to the North Sea. The French were known to be terribly nervous of this attack on the transports, especially as they had no battle cruisers to match the *Goeben*. It was for this reason that the C.-in-C., probably at the suggestion and with the approval of the Admiralty, kept his battle cruisers to

the westward of Sicily. Allowing for one battle cruiser away coaling, he could always place a superior force of two battle cruisers in the path of *Goeben* at any moment selected by the latter for her raid. The only alternative appeared to be a break through our patrol across the mouth of the Adriatic and a junction with the Austrian Fleet.

It appeared to us to be the most likely choice. To meet one battle cruiser with 11″ and 6″ guns, and one cruiser with small guns only, we had four armoured cruisers—one, the *Defence*, with 9·2″ and 7·5″ guns and the others with 7·5″ and 6″ guns—and, within call but not actually in company, two flotillas of destroyers. During the dark hours the odds were heavily on our side in spite of the superior armour protection of the battle cruiser. By daylight there was a risk that she might lay off and fight us outside the range of our guns, which might be put at a maximum of 16,000 yards. It was certainly known that the Germans had cut away the apertures of their heavy gun turrets to get a longer range. It must be clearly remembered that Admiral Troubridge had received orders on 4th August that he was not to get seriously engaged with superior forces.

In the event the *Goeben* and *Breslau did* turn north when they emerged from the Straits, but, before actually sighting us, they turned south-east and set course for Cape Matapan. Every movement was reported by the gallant little *Gloucester*, who was shadowing them. In an effort to delay their flight Captain Kelly actually engaged the *Breslau* at long

range for a short time but had to give up the action when *Goeben* turned and snarled at him.

Admiral Troubridge had been placed in a cruel dilemma. He had no ship with either the armament or the speed of the *Goeben* in his squadron; he was woefully short of coal—we had received none since we left Malta and had been steaming all the time; he had orders not to engage superior force; he must keep his squadron concentrated or she might steam right through us during the night. At the subsequent court-martial the whole case turned on this question of what was a superior force. Rear-Admiral Troubridge was acquitted and congratulated by the court, but the proceedings were never published and there has always been a certain stigma attaching to the affair.

I have heard it asserted that if Troubridge had steamed south, and resolutely sought an action, he might have destroyed *Goeben* and *Breslau*, or so damaged them that they could never have reached the Dardanelles; and that thus we should have averted the entry of Turkey into the war. The reply is that Troubridge naturally thought the Germans must be determined to enter the Adriatic and make junction with Austria; and that, by keeping his squadron concentrated across the entrance, he would be able to fight them under the best possible conditions during the night. The idea that the Germans might run for the Dardanelles had not, I am convinced, occurred to any senior officer in the Fleet. The only possible result of such action would appear to be internment by the Turks. Also it seems to me that if the German Admiral

wanted to go to Turkey he was free to do so at any time after leaving the Straits of Messina. We were far to the north and we had nothing beyond light cruisers and destroyers which could possibly catch him.

I discussed this whole business many times with Admiral Troubridge in later years. He felt very sore that the minutes of the court-martial had never been published. The public knew that he had been relieved of his command and court-martialled; but they did not know that he had been acquitted and congratulated by the court. He never faltered, in after years, in his conviction that he had acted correctly. But the Germans had escaped and someone must bear the blame.

If one is permitted to counter-attack, on behalf of the memory of an able cruiser Admiral, I would suggest that the blame rests with those who kept all three battle cruisers west of Sicily. Was not the whole French Fleet there? A battle cruiser with Troubridge would have made his task easy and the *Goeben* would never have reached Matapan.

CHAPTER XI

ANTIVARI; DARDANELLES

THE First Cruiser Squadron and destroyers arrived off Zante Island, at the entrance to the Gulf of Patras, at 10 A.M. on 7th August, and the destroyers, which had almost run out of coal, came alongside in turn and received thirty tons each from the cruisers. The Squadron then resumed its watch on the entrance to the Adriatic Sea.

The battle cruisers and *Weymouth* went to Malta to coal, preparatory to sweeping east. There was still no suspicion as to the *Goeben*'s ultimate destination, and it was thought probable she and the *Breslau* would hide among the many scores of islands in the Aegean Sea.

The news bulletin reported Lord Kitchener's appointment as Minister for War—which gave tremendous satisfaction. Otherwise there was a distinct feeling of gloom throughout the ship, due to our having missed a scrap with the German ships. We got news early in the day of the loss of the first British ship in the war—the *Amphion*, by a mine, with the loss of 131 lives.

On Saturday, 8th August, a queer thing happened. We received a signal from the Admiralty at noon authorising the commencement of hostilities at once

against Austria. We promptly went to action stations and endeavoured to cut off a destroyer which had been sighted and chased by *Wolverine*. Luckily we did not succeed, as the hostilities signal was cancelled at 1.45 P.M. Later it was again made and cancelled. All this seemed quite inexplicable at the time, but some years after, when visiting the Admiralty, I heard an explanation which at least sounds plausible if it is not correct. It was connected with the fact that three or four duty captains took charge of the Operations Division of the Admiralty in turn. One of them, having a slack night-watch and knowing war with Austria was imminent, wrote out the necessary signals to all concerned and placed them in a basket ready for transmission. His relief, coming on duty at 8 A.M., was informed that everything had been done; and the Captain who had kept the morning watch then disappeared. Later the "forenoon" Captain was going through the various baskets when he found the above-mentioned telegrams. He thought, "Good Lord! he's forgotten to get these away", and sent them off. The fact remains that we got the message and might easily have sunk an Austrian ship before it was cancelled.

After these alarms and excursions we took up patrol off Cape Dukato. We found out afterwards that *Inflexible*, *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* had reached Cape Matapan, on their way east in search of *Goeben*, when the Austrian hostilities signal was received, and that they immediately turned back to support us. That day Austria declared war on Russia.

On Sunday, 9th, we spent the forenoon coaling our

destroyers. In the afternoon the impatiently awaited "collier" arrived, and *Warrior* and *Duke of Edinburgh* were detached to take 1000 tons each. *Defence* and *Black Prince* remained on patrol. In the afternoon the Admiralty ordered the C.-in-C. to resume his search for the *Goeben*, and the three battle cruisers and *Weymouth* left for the Aegean.

From information received privately it appeared that the crews of the destroyers were getting very tired and were badly in need of a rest. The stokers in both cruisers and destroyers had a particularly hard time. Our men were working in three watches and during stand-off were continually disturbed by "action stations", coaling destroyers and trimming our own bunkers.

The Press reported a great rush of men at home to join the Army and that Portugal had offered her services unconditionally to England.

On Monday, 10th August, the Commander asked every officer and man on board to chip a square yard of paint per diem. There was a general response and we started in on one of the most pernickety jobs I have ever struck. However, with all the paint gone out of the ship it was quite obvious that the risk of fire in action would be much reduced. It was a noble gesture on the part of the Commander, as much of that paint was paid for out of his private pocket.

We spent the whole day patrolling up and down the Greek coast. Both during the forenoon and afternoon steamers were sighted and chased, but turned out to be Greek. We sighted an Italian destroyer during the afternoon but she gave us a wide berth. In the evening the

Admiralty ordered the *Black Prince* to proceed to Port Said at once, pass through the Canal and thoroughly search the Red Sea. We did not envy her as it was the hottest time of the year down there. *Dublin* and *Gloucester* were ordered to join the C.-in-C. in the Aegean. We got no direct messages from the latter, but that was easily understandable as he would not have wished to give away his position by the strength of his wireless signals.

On Tuesday, 11th August, two grim pieces of news came through: the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were reported in the Dardanelles, and the First Cruiser Squadron was placed under the orders of the French naval Commander-in-Chief. This latter created quite a sensation; we supposed it had never happened in the previous history of the British Navy.

At last we got some coal. We were 1600 tons short when the collier *Erato* was reported; under the lee of Santa Maura Island we took in 1400 of them. The coaling was an awful business, as the men were over-tired before it commenced. The watch of stokers not coaling did twenty-four hours below on end, cleaning boiler tubes.

At midnight on 12th August we were finally told to commence hostilities at once against Austria and directed to acknowledge receipt of the instruction. Earlier in the day we had been officially informed that Germany had sold the *Goeben* and *Breslau* to the Turks and that the crews were being sent home overland. The French Fleet arrived at Malta at daybreak. *Duke of Edinburgh* was detached to proceed to Aden.

The French Fleet joined up with us on Saturday, 15th August, under very nearly tragic circumstances. About 4.15 A.M., in company with *Warrior*, we were patrolling in the vicinity of Fano Island when a dense fog settled down and visibility was reduced to a few yards. About 8.30 we almost rammed a ship of the French Squadron and, going full speed astern, were ourselves just missed by the *Warrior*. It was the closest shave I have ever seen. The fog cleared about an hour later and we found ourselves in company with three French cruisers of the "Edgar Quinet" class. We cheered each other and the Rear-Admirals exchanged visits. The rest of the French Fleet arrived early in the afternoon; we called up our destroyers from Corfu, and the combined fleets sailed for the northward at 6 P.M. At a Council of War held during the afternoon the following plan had been decided upon: the combined fleets to be divided into two—"Battleships" and "Cruisers and Destroyers"; the former to steam up the Italian coast and the latter the Albanian coast; to meet at Antivari the following morning and catch between us an Austrian Squadron believed to be blockading that port. The French Fleet *looked* very business-like and efficient and was much larger than we had expected.

On Sunday, 16th August, our division duly arrived off Antivari at 9 A.M. We heard heavy firing and saw the battleship division bearing down towards us. It appeared that the Austrian second-class cruiser *Aspern* had seen us approaching and had run right into them. They opened fire on her at 9.3; she caught fire at 9.10

and sank at 9.33. Two Austrian destroyers were also sunk, one being cut in half by a heavy shell. The sinking of the *Aspern* looked almost like murder. She would not run ashore or haul her flag down and she had no possible chance against the French. A series of explosions preceded the sinking. The French ceased fire, but the *Aspern* let off one gun and they opened up again. She went down with about 240 men on board. It was a Sunday. Admiral Troubridge asked permission to pick up survivors, but the French C.-in-C. refused and ordered us south at full speed. Submarines were believed to be in the vicinity.

Next day we received Admiralty orders to proceed to the Dardanelles, with all available destroyers, as soon as possible. We called at Corfu, where I landed to get fresh provisions and vegetables, and left with the *Blenheim* and eight destroyers at noon. The other four were to follow when they had finished coaling. The *Warrior* was detached and ordered to Alexandria, leaving us as a flagship without a Squadron. We heard from Poldhu that England and Russia had sent an ultimatum to Turkey asking her to define her intentions within twenty-four hours and refusing to acknowledge the purchase of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*. They must either be interned or sent to sea.

The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Berkeley-Milne, made a general signal to the Fleet on the 18th saying that, in accordance with international agreement, the supreme command of the Allied Forces in the Mediterranean was vested in the French Admiral and that, as he was senior to the latter, it was necessary for

him to go home. This explained the recent situation. Unperturbed by changes in high places, I kept twelve hours' watch in the Intelligence office, chipped my usual square yard of paint, and bathed in the canvas bath on the quarterdeck during the dog watches. At daylight next morning we anchored in Besika Bay, near the entrance to the Dardanelles. Rear-Admiral Troubridge transferred his flag to *Indefatigable* and took his staff with him. We coaled and proceeded on patrol without cleaning ship.

The routine instituted for the blockade, or rather patrol, was for a relatively weak ship to steam up and down all night across the entrance to the Straits, the battle cruisers being hidden out of sight behind Tenedos or other convenient island. If the *Goeben* should come out, the battle cruisers would then be within close call and there would be little possibility of her escape. In other words, the actual patrol ship was something in the nature of a bait.

We received our second mail since leaving Malta at the beginning of the month. Again there was nothing for me. On the 22nd we took on board 9000 lb. of frozen beef and 9000 lb. of potatoes from the *Dago*—a welcome ship with a queer name. We had just got down to salt provisions.

About this time I obtained permission from the Commander to grow a beard. About a fortnight later the moustache was in fine trim, though the beard was, I admit, rather disappointing. Unfortunately I ran into the Captain in a bad temper on the fore-and-aft bridge. He asked me what the fungus was on my face and

whether I had permission to grow. I said I had. He said I obviously could not, and that I was to shave it off and report I had done so to the Commander—which I did.

We were like a lot of cats sitting outside a rat-hole. We steamed all night; we burnt up our coal; we replenished our bunkers—and still nothing happened. On the 28th August we got a signal from the Admiralty saying that if the *Goeben* and *Breslau* came out, whatever national colours they might be flying, we were to attack and destroy them. Meanwhile the British Ambassador at Constantinople was reporting almost daily his complete faith that Turkey was coming into the war on our side. We began to have suspicions that he was being led up the garden path. Things got so quiet that we began to lay out small targets and practise sub-calibre firing to keep our guns' crews from getting rusty. We got news of the sinking of the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* by the *Highflyer*, and of three German cruisers and two destroyers in the Heligoland Bight. Things on land did not appear to be going well in Belgium, but the Russian steam roller was on the move at last.

On Tuesday, 1st September, we got news that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had left the Gulf of Ismid and anchored off Marmora Island; the inshore patrol of destroyers was therefore increased to six. Later news came that fifteen transports had arrived at Aden *en route* for Suez and had been transferred by *Swiftsure* to *Black Prince* and *Duke of Edinburgh*, which looked as though we were bringing troops from India. We also

heard that our old friend Prince William of Wied had abdicated from the throne of Albania and that the insurgents had been admitted into Durazzo; we were surprised that he had lasted so long after the Great Powers had withdrawn their support. The Germans were getting horribly near Paris.

The 9th September saw the departure of Rear-Admiral Troubridge for England—recalled by the Admiralty, but no one quite knew why.

Things were becoming intolerably dull outside the Dardanelles and there seemed no indication whatever that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* would attempt to break out. We felt the present position of stalemate might go on for months. It was, therefore, a great relief to us all when we received information on 11th September that we were to be relieved by *Warrior*, and were to proceed to Gibraltar and fill up with coal preparatory to proceeding to the south-east coast of America. We sailed for Malta at 4 P.M. on the following day. On Sunday, 13th, I had the morning watch; about 6 A.M. we steamed at 18 knots through the narrow strait between Cerigo and Cape Malia, at the southern end of Greece—one of the most lovely views I can remember. Shortly after, we passed Matapan. We had a strong breeze, but scarcely any sea, and it was much warmer. At Malta we found everything changed. The French Fleet was in possession and the whole of the regular troops in the garrison had been replaced by Terriers. I landed in the afternoon and found Frenchmen everywhere—so much so that I could not even get a seat for supper at the Junior Officers' Club. It occurred to me that it was a little

dangerous to let them get too fond of this old possession of theirs. I did a lot of necessary shopping, both for myself and the gunroom mess, and heard confirmation of a big Russian victory against the Austrians at Lemberg. Good old steam roller!

We were only to have remained at Malta for twenty-four hours or so to coal and complete urgent defects. About 5 P.M. on 16th September, however, after being there three days, our sailing orders were cancelled for some unknown reason and we were told to remain at forty-eight hours' notice. This occasioned great disappointment throughout the ship and the men showed it in a characteristic way by getting drunk ashore and smuggling liquor on board. The Captain gave some pretty heavy punishments in an effort to check this, but with very doubtful results.

One evening, when the Sub-Lieutenant was ashore, I offered to drill the midshipmen and they expressed themselves very keen that I should do so. I went through the usual list, which I had experienced in the *Drake*, of "fork in the beam", "gun team" and "obstacle race through the scuttles and over the upper deck", and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Then I gave the order "Fetch Bumf" and there was a rush from the gunroom mess. I sat with a watch in my hand and, in an incredibly short time, a handy lad dashed in with a piece of latrine paper in his hand. As he had broken the record I asked no questions, but gave him a glass of port and stood him off for the rest of the drill.

Next morning the Fleet Paymaster, a portly and rather waspish-looking man—but with a heart of gold

—sent for me on the quarterdeck. As we walked up and down, the following conversation took place:

"Last night, Fitch, I was sitting in the roundhouse, having my after-dinner smoke and doing my duty, when without any warning, the canvas curtain was pushed aside and a hand grabbed some paper from the box. And when I said 'Hi!' the curtain was pushed into my face and I couldn't see who it was. Nor was I in a position to chase him and find out. And look at my nose."

I looked at his nose; some of the skin was missing.

"I can only say, sir, that the young gentlemen in the gunroom have the greatest respect for you and I'm sure none of them would knowingly subject you to such an indignity."

"I didn't say the lad saw who it was. He took jolly good care not to—pushing the curtain in my face like that; nearly knocked my pipe down my throat. Were you drilling the young officers last night?"

"Yes, sir, I was."

"Then who was it?"

"I couldn't possibly give him away, sir. He's a good lad. The wardroom latrines are nearer the gunroom than our own. He broke the record and I gave him a glass of port. But I asked no questions, sir."

"Fitch, you should know me better than that. Luckily for you I was in a gunroom once. Bring him to my cabin for a cocktail just before lunch."

Two years later that young officer won the D.S.C.

Meanwhile the dockyard were putting us into apple-

pie order as regards defects, were altering the positions of some of the searchlights and building much-needed upper-deck shelters for night-defence stations. Before our arrival they had been working overtime for weeks on the French ships, which were in a bad state and only too glad to get a British dockyard to square them up. A dockyard foreman told me they had replaced two burst 12″ guns—one in the *Liberté* and the other in the *République*—and indeed had replaced practically everything from a tin tack to a ship's boiler. On Sunday, 20th September, we were told to sail for the Dardanelles on Monday morning, but the same evening those orders were cancelled. In the afternoon I repeated my swim from Fort St. Angelo to Tigne Bay, described in a previous chapter, this time without any difficulty; but a Sub-Lieutenant who accompanied me was very done up before we reached the ship. In the evening I went to church for the first time for two months. On the Monday morning we embarked Vice-Admiral Carden and his staff and returned to the Dardanelles. We began to think the *Defence* was an unlucky ship; we would much sooner have gone to South America. It appeared that Admiral Carden was taking charge of the British ships at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, being replaced as Admiral Superintendent at Malta Dockyard by Vice-Admiral Limpus. As Admiral Limpus had been until recently in charge of the Turkish Navy it looked as though relations were becoming strained. On the other hand we received a telegram from the British Ambassador at Constantinople, who had protested to the Grand Vizier about the *Breslau* going into the Black

Sea, saying that he, the Grand Vizier, was absolutely confident that Turkey would maintain strict neutrality.

On 23rd September, the day we arrived back at the Dardanelles, we heard the distressing news of the loss of the cruisers *Hogue*, *Cressy* and *Aboukir* in the North Sea. It was reported that *Aboukir* had been first torpedoed by a submarine and that *Hogue* and *Cressy*, going to her assistance, were also put down, with heavy loss of life. It was a bad show. That afternoon the Admiralty telegraphed to say it must be clearly recognised that, if a ship was torpedoed or mined, other large ships must clear out of the danger area and call up minor vessels to render assistance. This further applied to the well-recognised rule of war to leave disabled vessels in a Fleet action to look after themselves.

We had received orders that if Turkish torpedo-boats came out of the Dardanelles at night, with or without lights and close to our patrol, they were to be attacked. During the afternoon of 28th some excitement was caused by an incident of this kind. A Turkish gun-boat appeared and was obviously spying on us. One of our destroyers chased her and another cut her off and brought her to. On boarding her they found two German naval officers in uniform. After being given a solemn warning she was allowed to proceed, and ran like a hare. We had the *Defence*'s guns trained on her during the whole proceeding.

It was the common belief among the officers that war with Turkey was imminent, in spite of anything

our Ambassador might say. We were actually given our targets on that assumption. *Indomitable*, *Indefatigable* and *Defence* were to concentrate on *Goeben*; the two French ships which had arrived were to take on the two old Turkish battleships. We felt they would be fools to come out against such terrific superiority.

During all this time, there being no opportunity of getting ashore, we kept ourselves fit by violent exercise during the dog watches. Hockey on the quarterdeck, bathing in the canvas bath, sabre practice and boxing were the chief forms of amusement. We still worked three watches in the Intelligence office, but there was little to do beyond receiving, and endeavouring to decipher, German code messages. My Paymaster work went on as usual; on 6th October I varied it by auctioning the kit of the able seaman who had died at Durazzo. The men were most generous and continually threw their purchases back to be sold again. In the end I made £30 of it.

On 7th October two incidents occurred which promised a much desired break in the monotony. At 10.30 A.M. we received orders to sail for England next day, no reason being given; there was lively discussion as to whether we were to join the Grand Fleet, to commission the *Warspite*, or whether we were required in connection with a court-martial on Rear-Admiral Troubridge. In the afternoon the flagship suddenly ordered the Squadron to turn 16 points and go to action stations; *Goeben* and *Breslau*, with Turkish ships, had been reported at Chanak—about eight miles from

the entrance. We patrolled all night, ready for action, but they did not appear. Next day we learnt that they had returned to Constantinople and we had lost our last chance of meeting the *Goeben*. On Friday, 9th October, we sailed for home at 17 knots.

A.П.Ф.

CHAPTER XII

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

On arrival at Malta we found there were half a dozen French ships in the Grand Harbour and that our billet was between two of them. The skipper shook the Frenchmen to the core by taking the ship in at 16 knots and going full speed astern right on to our buoy. They could not believe their eyes. Their ships always had several tugs to take care of them. We only stayed one day and most of us managed to dine ashore and seek a little longed-for social distraction.

At Gibraltar we coaled ship and received instructions not to proceed home but await further orders. We realised there must be another change of plan as the Captain, Navigating Commander and Captain of Marines were instructed to join *Euryalus* for passage to England for the Troubridge enquiry, and we could have taken them in the ordinary course of events. I took the opportunity of visiting the *Carmania*, in dry-dock for repairs after the fight in which she had sunk the *Cap Trafalgar*. She had been very badly damaged, her bridge and chart-house destroyed, and had three hundred and ninety holes of various kinds. She had nine killed and twenty-six wounded. This was, I think, the only action between two armed merchant ships during the War. The *Carmania* had fired at the water-line

and the *Cap Trafalgar* at the upper works. The latter had appeared almost undamaged when the *Carmania* was already badly on fire. But damage down below counts most and the *Cap Trafalgar* sank while the *Carmania* was still a floating but happy wreck.

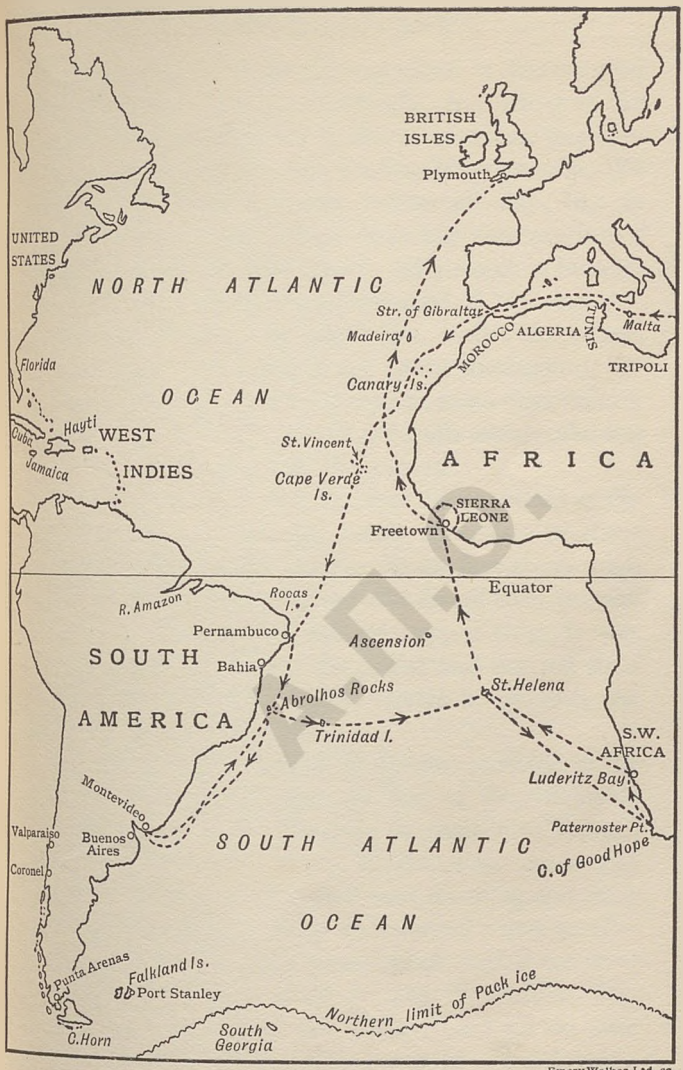
We sailed from Gibraltar on Friday, 16th October, with sealed orders. On the Saturday we sighted the Canary Islands and passed the *Highflyer* steering north. On Sunday we auctioned a paper brought out by the officers in aid of the Prince of Wales Fund, twenty-four copies realising £75. I got one for 30s. The wardroom copies averaged £3 : 10s. each.

We arrived at St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, on 20th October, and a collier came alongside. Owing to the swell, however, she badly buckled our torpedo-net shelf and we had to move closer in to the shore. We then took in 1000 tons in great heat and without native labour. During the whole day naked buck niggers were lying off the ship diving for coins and lumps of coal; they were extraordinarily good at it. The place is not unlike Aden to look at. There were eleven German merchant ships in the harbour and one small Portuguese warship. She had her searchlights playing on the Germans and the entrance all night—lest they should try to escape to the Canaries. She expected war to be declared by Portugal at any moment and then she would enjoy herself. We proceeded to sea at 6 A.M. and set course for Pernambuco. The only point of interest was our first sight of flying-fish—swarms of them, charming little fellows. They seemed

to glide, like swallows, and only dropped back into the water when their wings got dry.

We crossed the Equator at 10 A.M. on Saturday, 24th. Owing to the fact that the German cruiser *Karlsruhe* had been reported off the coast, and that we might sight something at any moment, the Captain asked that there should be no horseplay, and indeed there was no ceremony of any kind. All the same, we were glad to have crossed the line, as opportunities in the Navy were becoming less and less frequent, especially since the Dominions started their own squadrons and the British Fleet was concentrated in home and Mediterranean waters. We arrived at Pernambuco early on Monday, 26th October, and anchored about a mile from the shore, outside the breakwater. The harbour was crowded with German ships—we counted fifteen of them—who hooted and howled in derision on their sirens when they saw us. They had all been interned "for the duration" and were not feeling very happy about it.

My first sight of South America—I had the morning watch—did not impress me very much. Pernambuco is low-lying and has a swampy appearance. It reminded me somewhat of the first view of Venice from the sea. During the forenoon the British Consul and Intelligence Officer came on board and had a long consultation with the Captain. The result was that we sailed again at 1 P.M. for the Abrolhos Rocks. Just outside the harbour we sighted an armed merchant cruiser and went to action stations, but she turned out to be our own ship the *Macedonia*. We were absolutely ignorant of the position of most of our own ships



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TRACK-CHART OF THE *DEFENCE*

А.П.О.

owing to the use of wireless being taboo in case we gave away our positions to the *Karlsruhe*. According to the Consul we only missed her at Rocas Island by one day.

Next day we struck a very curious phenomenon. We had had the wind and sea astern all day, but at 3.45 P.M.—and quite without warning—we ran into a wind and sea from right ahead. As a result it became uncomfortably rough with a good deal of "movement" on the ship. During the afternoon, whilst the others were sleeping, I red-leaded my cabin throughout; we had finished scraping off all the paint some days before. The bathing in the upper-deck sail-bath was developing into a huge ducking match these days.

On the forenoon of 28th October we anchored at the Abrolhos Rocks—a strange, lonely spot; two or three pinnacles of bare rock, about a dozen feet above high water, with a lighthouse on one. We found the *Cornwall* and three colliers there, but no supply ship. It was difficult to find a lee, and the collier and our net shelf both had a rough time. After twelve hours of it the collier was hardly seaworthy.

That night we received an important message to the effect that we were to join the flag of Rear-Admiral Cradock further south. We were to proceed to Montevideo, coal, purchase charts of the west coast and await further orders. We sailed next morning and after a quiet voyage, during which we invented a new sport—fishing for albatross with thread lines trailed astern—we entered the River Plate on 3rd November. The estuary is so wide that we saw neither bank till we were in sight of Montevideo. The latter is a fine-looking

place, dominated by an imposing fortress on a hill. We anchored at 8 A.M. and fired a salute.

At midnight we received some very bad news from German sources. It appeared that at sunset on the night of Sunday, 1st November, a German Squadron, consisting of *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Nürnberg* had met Rear-Admiral Cradock's squadron, composed of *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, *Glasgow* and the merchant cruiser *Otranto*, north of Coronel in Chile. A fight had ensued. After about one hour's action *Monmouth* had turned turtle and sunk. *Good Hope* and *Glasgow* had drawn off in the darkness. *Good Hope* was on fire and was believed to have sunk.

Everyone on board was very mad about this. Had *Defence* been there it would have been a very different story; we were individually rather stronger than either *Scharnhorst* or *Gneisenau*. Had we not been held up at Malta and Gibraltar we *should* have been there. Even since entering the River Plate we had been ordered to the west coast, countermanded, and then ordered off again. Now definite instructions arrived from the Admiralty that we were to remain in the vicinity of Montevideo till joined by *Carnarvon* and *Cornwall*.

At first there was real doubt about *Good Hope* having been sunk, and we were itching to be despatched to give her and the *Glasgow* a helping hand. A telegram from Punta Arenas reported that a damaged cruiser resembling *Good Hope*, accompanied by a ship like *Otranto*, had passed Punta Delgada early on 6th, steering east; another cruiser, believed to be *Glasgow*, had been sighted the previous day.

We anchored off English Bank, about seventeen miles from Montevideo, awaiting further orders. On the Sunday the Admiralty telegraphed that *Canopus* (an old battleship), *Glasgow* and *Otranto* were making for Montevideo to concentrate forces. *Defence* was to wait for *Carnarvon*. They evidently knew *Good Hope* had gone.

On the Monday night the Admiralty changed their minds about *Canopus* and decided she must remain at the Falkland Islands to defend Port Stanley. We were unable to get into wireless touch with her, owing to atmospherics, until she was about one day's steaming from the River Plate, and then we sent her back alone. It seemed hardly fair. She would be lost if she ran into the five German ships. Next day the *Otranto* steamed in from the south and the *Carnarvon* and *Cornwall* from the north. We all thus successfully concentrated before the Germans could eat us up piecemeal. Rear-Admiral Stoddart and his staff joined us from *Carnarvon* and for a short time we became a flagship again.

This was my birthday and we celebrated it royally. Lots of the wardroom officers came in during the forenoon and in the evening two of them dined with me. We had a tremendously successful sing-song and my wine bill was clewed up for the month.

Next day the *Glasgow* arrived and we manned ship and cheered her. She had one very large hole about 8 feet by 6 feet under her port quarter, and her officers and crew reported a nerve-racking time since the fight eleven days before. Judging by wireless messages they had been chased by *Leipzig* and *Dresden* after the action,

and had only got away by steaming 24 knots. Doing that speed in the vicinity of Cape Horn, with the sea washing in and out of a huge hole, was no joke. On the way north they had struck a whale. They said they were never so glad to see anyone in their lives as when they first sighted us. From their accounts it was certain *Good Hope* as well as *Monmouth* had been sunk, and that the German ships had not been seriously damaged.

We sent eighty men and a volunteer party of officers over to coal her and our shipwrights got busy on that large hole. The repairs, if only temporary, would make her reasonably seaworthy. Then we all sailed for the north, the plan being to concentrate everyone at the Abrolhos Rocks.

On the 12th November we got news that the Admiralty were taking the bull by the horns at last. Vice-Admiral Sturdee, with the battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, was sailing immediately from home waters and would take command of the South Atlantic and South Pacific stations. We also heard that Turkey had gone in on the other side after all; but we were glad we were not still hovering about outside the Dardanelles.

Five days later we again anchored at the Abrolhos Rocks and indulged the vain hope that the Germans would find us there before the battle cruisers arrived. We got our first mails for six weeks; this time I did very well. Whilst here I performed my most useful service for the Navy. I was fishing over the stern with the Fleet Surgeon when I noticed something glinting—directly below me. At first I thought it was a sun fish; then I became convinced it was a rock. I ran off and

reported my find to the Navigating Officer, who took it very seriously. He brought aft a sounding lead but at first could not get bottom at all. He persevered, however, and, after about half an hour, got bottom at five and a quarter fathoms—about 31 feet. It was a needle, or pinnacle, of rock over which we were swinging to and fro, and as we drew about 28 feet, in a swell it might easily have gone clean through *our* bottom at any moment. All ships were ordered to shorten cable and take careful soundings within their swinging arc. I suggested that the rock, when charted, should be named after me. I never heard, however, that their recognition of my discovery went so far!

During the next week we carried out target practice and fished for sharks. We caught several large ones, using pieces of salt pork as bait on enormous hooks. It took several men to haul them on board. They were cruel-looking brutes. The bos'n claimed the shark skin, and the warrant officers cooked the fins.

The battle cruisers steamed in on Thursday, 26th November, and made a very pleasing sight. We became quite an imposing-looking Fleet and it was generally felt that the days of Von Spee and his squadron were numbered. The only doubt was what they would do. They were reported as still on the west coast of South America. Would they capture the Falkland Islands and, ignorant of the arrival of the battle cruisers, sweep up the east coast to attack us? Would they cross the Pacific to Australia and risk battle with Australia's squadron and the Japs? Or would they cross to South Africa, bombard Simon's Town and clean up our relatively

weak squadron there? The balance of opinion on board was that they would choose the last alternative, more especially as there was an insurrection in South Africa at the time. We were consequently delighted when we received Admiralty orders to transfer Rear-Admiral Stoddart and his staff to *Carnarvon*, and to steam across to the Cape Station to reinforce our sister ship, the *Minotaur*, and the light cruisers *Weymouth* and *Dartmouth* there. The battle cruisers brought the news that Rear-Admiral Troubridge had been honourably acquitted at the court-martial in connection with the *Goeben* affair, at which there was great joy on board *Defence*. That night we sailed for the Cape.

On the second day out we reached the small rocky island of Trinidad (not the one in the West Indies) and searched it for *Karlsruhe* or any of her colliers. Nothing was there.[1] We were disappointed, but interested to see the island, as it is quite off the beaten track, apparently uninhabited, and probably never seen by one in millions. On the third day we had a few minutes of great excitement when enemy ships were reported in sight from the masthead. We went to action stations, thinking they were the Von Spee squadron, and turned towards them to do as much damage as possible—only to find that they were liners coming home in company.

We sighted St. Helena at daylight on 2nd December. I had the morning watch, so had a good view as we approached. It looked as volcanic as Vesuvius—burnt

[1] It appeared later that she had blown up in mysterious circumstances.

and rugged—but there appeared to be some lovely valleys and cultivated strips. Port Jackson—in a canyon between two towering cliffs—looked particularly snug and cosy. When the inevitable collier came alongside, we found that local volunteers had already topped her derricks and filled all her bags and were very keen to lend us a hand, which we much appreciated. There was a garrison of marines in charge of two 6″ guns mounted on the cliff at the entrance.

Next day the Captain gave leave to officers in two watches—our first time ashore since leaving Gibraltar, six weeks before. Four of us walked out to Napoleon's tomb and from there to Longwood, the house in which he was virtually a prisoner for so many years. We considered the place quite inadequate for the confinement of an Emperor. We found a country cart, without springs and full of potatoes, in which we drove back, but missed the pinnace and had to hire a shore boat off. That evening we sailed south-east for Table Bay; speed, 18 knots. The Commander-in-Chief at the Cape was wanting us urgently, for some reason.

On 8th December we reached our rendezvous with the C.-in-C. fifteen miles west of Paternoster Point, just north of Table Bay. There we met *Minotaur*, *Hyacinth*, *Weymouth*, the old battleship *Albion* and three transports. There was a heavy swell and the transports looked lifeless; we thought most of the poor devils were down below being seasick. We took our place in the line and turned north. The Admiralty reported that Von Spee's squadron had left the coast of Chile and was probably heading for South Africa.

Next day a further Admiralty message stated that Sturdee had met Von Spee off the Falkland Islands on the 8th; that *Gneisenau*, *Scharnhorst* and *Leipzig* had been sunk, and *Nürnberg* and *Dresden* were still being chased.

Our first reaction in the *Defence* was bitter disappointment at not being there. The feeling spread throughout the ship that we were fated never to go into action. Poor old *Defence*! She went into action for the first time at Jutland in 1916 and was sunk with all hands.

That night we arrived at Lüderitz Bay, German South-West Africa, and the transports went inside and landed the Union troops. There was a report, however, that the German battle cruiser *Von der Tann* had escaped from the North Sea and, after coaling, we were ordered off, in company with *Minotaur*, for an unknown destination. While at sea we started to paint the ship grey and white in patches—the idea being that all parts ordinarily in shadow should be painted white, and the masts, funnels and hull grey and white alternately. We would look a queer sight, when finished, but it would make range-taking and identification difficult for an enemy. Our destination proved to be St. Helena, where we arrived on 15th December.

We spent only one day there. While the ship was coaling I landed on duty and went up to the marines' quarters and signal station at the top of the cliff—up by the road and down by the precipitous steps. I took a small local boy with me as a guide; he got quite keen after I had bought him a new straw hat and a packet

of sweets. On reaching the town again I arranged for the mail, which we had left behind a fortnight before, to be brought on board again, and then put through some business with the provision contractors. That night we sailed for Sierra Leone. A British Protectorate of Egypt and bombardment of the Yorkshire coast by German cruisers were reported in the news.

We recrossed the Line on 19th December but it was too terribly hot to arouse much interest, the temperature being 96° F. in the coolest parts of the ship. Two days later, steaming through a thick haze and a placid sea, we anchored off Freetown, Sierra Leone. It looked a lovely spot as we entered the estuary—dense tropical vegetation, in itself a pleasant change to the eye, and the town well situated round the base of two hills; there were lots of natives about and one hundred of them helped to coal us.

Two of us landed next day to have a good look round. We started off with a visit to the native bazaar, where we found mostly English trade goods, but where I purchased a native grass hammock as a curio. We then inspected the main streets and the Cathedral before going to the railway and taking tickets to the hill station. We were hardly seated before the skipper got into the same carriage in company with the Governor and his staff. Arrived at the hill station and being hungry, we explored the jungle but failed to find any fruit-bearing trees. We saw many wonderful butterflies and birds, but no snakes. Getting thirsty, we called on the officers' mess at the military barracks, where we found most of the occupants asleep in their hammocks;

we saw the troops parade after tea. And so back to the ship. During our wanderings we had been much struck by the way all the natives spoke English in spite of their barbaric appearance; by the fine figures of the women, who carry everything on their heads and walk very erect; by the very gaudy, but picturesque, appearance of their flouncy skirts—when they wore any; and by the way they carried their children slung round their backs. The funniest sight we saw was a black parson carrying an umbrella and dressed in a white dog collar, and nothing else.

On 24th December we received a telegram from the King and Queen wishing the Navy a happy Christmas. Christmas Day, my sixth in succession spent on board ship, was fairly quiet and the messes were not decorated; in the afternoon we sailed for England. We sighted the Cape Verde Islands early next day, but did not stop, and we found nothing to detain us at the Canary Islands. At the entrance to the Bay we ran into very heavy weather and were taking green seas right over the fore turret. The gunroom was practically afloat and fires were put out almost immediately they were lit. Several rolls of between 25 and 30 degrees were measured, but I had been so long at sea that I felt no inconvenience. My cabin mate was, however, thrown clean out of his bunk and became jammed between the wash-stand and the door; he was found by the sentry asleep in that position. No doubt he had been partially stunned. On Sunday, 3rd January, we completed our 3000-mile non-stop run from Sierra Leone and secured at Plymouth.

CHAPTER XIII

BRITISH NAVAL MISSION TO SERBIA

In January 1915 there happened to me one of those sudden and unexpected events which alter the whole of one's subsequent career.

After arrival at Plymouth early in the month I was informed, to my infinite regret, that I was being relieved of my duties in *Defence* by a more junior officer and was appointed to the Royal Naval Barracks for disposal. It was believed that I was destined for the *Warspite*, then due for commissioning. I went to Dartmouth for a few days' leave at the home of my naval brother and there I went down with a severe attack of influenza. I heard that nearly half the complement of the *Defence* were similarly affected. The sudden transition from the tropics to a severe English winter had been too much for us.

I had just reached that groggy stage of convalescence where one is allowed out for a short walk when I received telegraphic instructions from the Admiralty to report immediately to Rear-Admiral Troubridge in London. The word "immediate" meant immediate to me and, despite the protests of my brother and the college doctor, I gathered together a few necessities and travelled up by the night train to London. I was feeling very weak and wobbly when I started, but my carriage

was shared by two Cambridge undergraduates; we sat up all night and finished a bottle of whisky, and I felt better on arrival. The Admiral's first words to me were that I looked like death, but I promised him I would be all right in a day or two. He told me that a few days earlier the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill, had sent for him. The interview was opened in words rather typical of that somewhat theatrical but exceedingly able man. "Admiral," he said, "will you accept a post in the forefront of the battle?" Troubridge, who had been ardently hoping for another command since the day of his acquittal in November, unhesitatingly said that he would. Mr. Churchill then went on to explain that the Austrian monitors were bombarding Belgrade. King Peter of Serbia had sent a personal appeal to King George for help to repel these attacks and protect his capital. The appeal had been referred to the Admiralty. Mr. Churchill had decided to send out a Naval Mission with Rear-Admiral Troubridge in command.

Forty names had been submitted to the Admiral from which he was free to choose his secretary. Mine was the most junior and appeared at the bottom of the list. He had chosen me.

It meant a sudden jump from one to two and a half stripes—from the rank of Sub-Lieutenant to that of Lieutenant-Commander, missing out the rank of Lieutenant altogether; it also meant a big increase in pay and allowances. When I reported to the Admiralty they told me I was a lucky fellow; I was the youngest Admiral's secretary in the whole history of the Navy.

No doubt the record has been broken since, as records are these days.

As a junior officer in the *Defence* the Admiral had been beyond my horizon—a great man looked up to with reverence and awe. I could not remember having come into personal contact with him at all; but I knew he was human because he was always followed by a seaman with a bucket during the first twenty-four hours at sea. I was his Secretary for the greater part of the next four years and, when our personal relations had become more intimate, I asked him one day why he had chosen me. "Not because you have any brains," he said, "but because you bobbed up in every sport the flagship had a hand in. I always seemed to be presenting you with prizes and medals. When Churchill told me I must be prepared to rough it out in Serbia I looked round for a fit and hardy staff, and that's why I chose you." And I had been hoping that it was my brains! But, after that, who shall say that games do not help a career?

There was a lot to do and we had exactly three days in which to do it. The whole of those three days was divided between the Admiralty, my outfitters, and the Army and Navy Stores. On 30th January, at precisely 2 P.M., we sailed in the P. & O. *Caledonia* from Tilbury Dock. That night we were inoculated against typhoid fever.

An amusing incident occurred right away. There were three of us to be inoculated—the Admiral, Lieutenant-Commander Kerr, who had been appointed as Flag Lieutenant, and myself. It was decreed that I

should be the first victim. I have a very tough skin—"A skin like a shark", the ship's doctor said—and there was great difficulty in getting the needle in. After two or three abortive attempts to pierce my groin the doctor almost charged at me with his syringe, and met with some success. Thinking his needle must be blunt, he made a similar violent lunge at the Admiral and it went in up to the hilt. It was then that I first heard an Admiral swear.

On arrival at Gibraltar the Admiral and I paid personal visits to the Admiral Superintendent of the dockyard and his Secretary. On the far Danube we felt we could not have too many dockyard friends. Here, too, an old gunroom friend of mine—a Lieutenant, also on passage—landed his lady friend. His father, a fox-hunting squire, had paid her passage from England and seen them off, but it was rightly felt the Admiral might object.

Off Algiers we played a deck cricket match between the Services. The Admiral captained the Navy, and a General, *en route* to Egypt, the Army. The Admiral was bowled first ball by the General with a sneak, or grub, and was furious; however, in spite of that early disaster, we won. Here, too, I was nearly robbed at bridge; an onlooker and accomplice, with a small reflector in the handle of his walking-stick, being caught red-handed.

We reached Malta on 7th February and made our headquarters at the Osborne Hotel. Again we made close contact with the dockyard, called on the French C.-in-C., the Governor and the Italian Consulate,

lunched at Admiralty House, and sailed in the Messageries steamer *Australien* on the 13th. Two days later we reached Athens, where we all three lunched with the Ambassador, Sir Francis Elliott, and got the "low-down" on Balkan politics during the afternoon.

Arrived at Salonika we made firm friends with the Consul-General, Wratislaw—an extremely able man and one who was to be a tower of strength to us in the months to come. As Greece was neutral we changed into civilian clothes before landing and thus disguised our arrival from the Austrian and German Consuls, who were still resident in the town. This precaution may have saved trouble between Greece and the Central Powers but it did not expedite our journey to the frontier. As workmen we commanded no respect and it took us over six hours to do thirty-odd miles. Once past the border, however, we changed into British naval uniform. I shall never forget the faces of the other passengers when we first emerged in the corridor after our metamorphosis.

There was no restaurant car on the train and, by the time we reached Nish, the food we had purchased at Salonika had run out. However, we were made very comfortable by the British Minister, Sir Charles des Graz, and the Legation staff, and were given full particulars of the Serbian situation and the position as we might expect to find it at Belgrade. Nish was full of refugees and had five times its normal population to be looked after and fed. We called in turn on General Boyovitch, the Serbian Minister of War, M. Pashitch, the Prime Minister, M. Yovanovitch, the Under-Secretary

for Foreign Affairs, and, finally, were received by the Crown Prince Alexander himself. They all gave us a very warm welcome and stressed the need of our immediate presence in Belgrade. We delayed one day whilst the Admiral conferred with the French Minister, M. Boppe, and the Russian Minister, Prince Trubetskoi, and I made all necessary arrangements with Serbian officials for our support and the swift passage of those who would follow after us; and on Monday, 22nd February, we arrived at Belgrade.

А.П.Ф.

CHAPTER XIV

BELGRADE, 1915

BELGRADE—or Beograd, the "White Fortress", as it is called in the Balkans—was, when we reached it, a city of the dead. It had been occupied by the Austrians early in the War and reoccupied by the Serbs just before our arrival. Whether the usual sanitary arrangements had fallen into neglect, or whether it was one of the normal sequelae of a Balkan war, I do not know, but a dreadful epidemic of typhus fever was then raging. Typhus, which has no relation to typhoid or enteric, corresponds to the old jail fever, which was at one time prevalent in all European countries. The infection is carried by large white lice, fever is high, the crisis occurs at about the fourteenth day, and the result is usually fatal. We were met by the news that the hospitals were full to capacity, that the sick—and often the dead—were lying in the streets, and that there was no transport and nowhere to take them. The population of the city, normally 150,000, was reduced to about 5000. We were warned to be particularly careful, and we started our duties with our tunic sleeves tied up with string and the bottom of our slacks tucked into our socks; the louse must be kept from contact with the skin. We examined our underclothing minutely every night. British hospitals were on the way out but the epidemic was well on the wane

before they were due to arrive. The sunshine of spring killed it.

Already installed we found Commander Cardale (a British officer with flag rank in the Greek Navy) and a small staff, Captain Elliott, R.M.L.I., with a detachment of marines, and small naval forces supplied by France and Russia. The British and the Russians had some mines; the French two 6″ naval guns; the Russians one 6″ and some smaller ones. Our job was to co-ordinate the naval defence of Belgrade.

Our marines, and later our naval ratings also, were housed in an empty secondary school in the centre of the town. The Admiral, Kerr and I took over an ex-Austrian villa, with a pleasant walled garden, rather nearer the river. It was within full view of the Austrian artillery on the further bank, and at first we felt we were unduly exposed; we remained there, however, comparatively undisturbed for eight months. The truth was that any house in Belgrade, which stands on a peninsula of land at the junction of the Danube and Save rivers, was within easy range of the enemy's guns and, that being so, considerations of danger gave way to those of comfort.

As the Serbs were quite ignorant of naval ranks and uniforms, we changed over to the Army equivalents. The Admiral wore the distinction marks of a major-general; Kerr and I those of a major. We were also given these ranks in the Serbian Army and asked to wear Serbian uniform on night operations—to preserve us from our friends. All uniforms were khaki, our blue naval kit being sent down to the British Legation

at Nish. In other words, the Royal Navy had gone ashore.

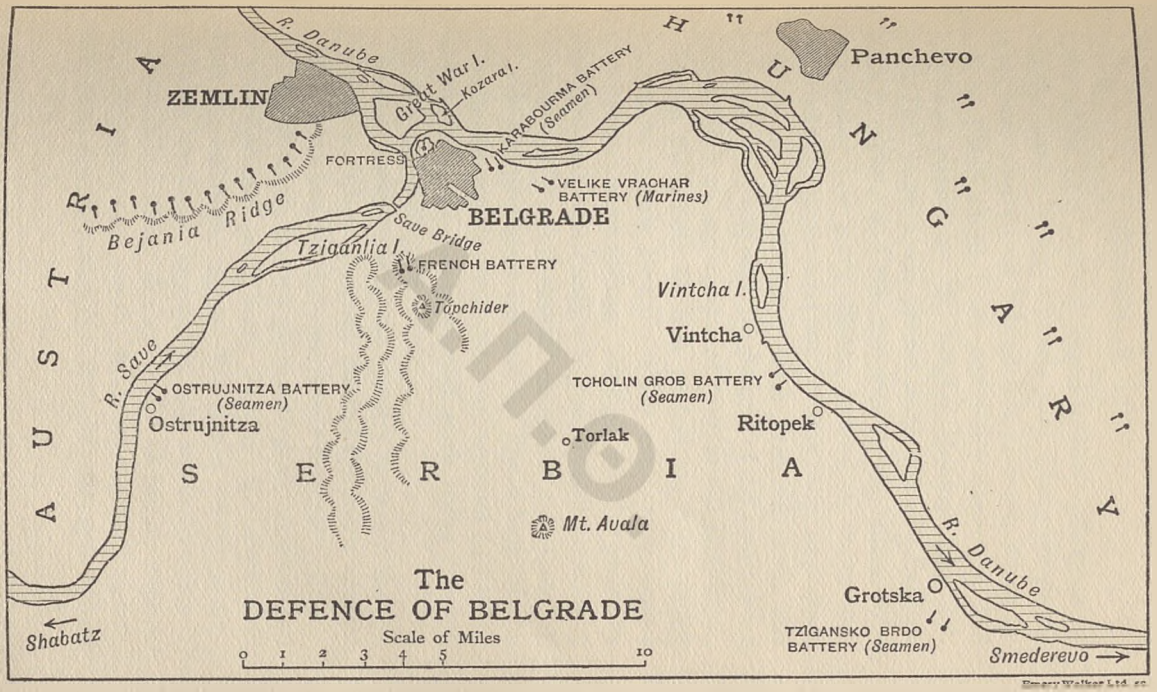
The position on the river was that the Austrians had half a dozen monitors; the Serbians had none. Whenever they felt inclined, the Austrians would leave their anchorage a few miles away above Zemlin, steam down the Danube or up the Save rivers, and "plaster" the city and defences to their hearts' content. The Serbian artillery available for reply was mostly old and out of date; the few modern pieces were of the howitzer type and useless against a moving target. The arrival of the French 6″ naval guns had so far made little difference, as they were loth to open fire for fear of betraying their position to the batteries across the river. It was our job to find means to keep those monitors at home.

Immediately after we had settled in, and Commander Cardale had returned to Greece, we made close contact with General Jivkovitch and his staff at the Belgrade Army Headquarters; following that we called on the heads of the French and Russian naval units. The Serbs met us with open arms, the navy men with more reserve. The truth was that independent units did not particularly welcome a "foreign" Admiral in command. They requested instructions from their Ministers at Nish. We had anticipated that; the result was satisfactory and we could go ahead.

During the next few weeks our marines were sent out almost regularly at night laying mines. Two fields, one of three lines and the other of two, were prepared. Each field was supplied with a gap, or gate, through

which a vessel could proceed. Laying the mines was dangerous; but negotiating the gate in the darkness, wind and rain, as our people often did, appeared to me to be more dangerous still. A great trouble was that the depth of the river varied tremendously in winter time. In heavy rain the water-level would rise anything up to a score of feet; contact mines, moored six feet below the surface, would then become quite innocuous. If, on the other hand, they were moored nearer the surface and the river fell, they tended to lie afloat, an easy target for Austrian pom-pom or rifle fire. Constant adjustment was necessary and the work was never finished.

Early in March we received a very welcome addition to our ranks. Twenty-six gunnery and torpedo specialist ratings arrived from Malta. They also had travelled incognito. With these men there, supplemented by the manual labour which the Serbs could supply, we could build up a force of almost any size. The specialists were accompanied by a naval surgeon and another anxiety was laid to rest. Two days later the eagerly awaited guns arrived, and thereafter we were very busy arranging for their removal and emplacement in position. There were eight 4·7″ naval guns on Percy Scott carriages; these were almost exactly similar to the famous Long Tom used during the siege of Ladysmith. The effective range was about 10,000 yards. We had already agreed with the Serbs that they should be divided into four batteries of two guns each—one on the Save and three on the Danube. The nearest battery was two miles from Belgrade, the furthest



Note.—Ostrujnitza and Karabourma batteries interchangeable. The enemy concentrated 200 guns on Bejania Ridge and batteries at intervals along the Hungarian banks.

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thirty miles. They were dragged to their positions by bullocks—about twenty to each gun. The guns themselves were covered with branches of trees, while on trek, to shield them from aeroplane observers and long-range glasses on the heights commanding Belgrade. Each battery was placed in charge of a Serbian Artillery captain and the majority of the gun's crew were Serbs. The petty officer, second in command, who acted as gunlayer, and one or more other important positions in each battery, were selected from the specialists at our disposal. By the end of the summer we reckoned that we had 1400 Serbs under our command.

During the whole of this period we were much troubled by hostile aircraft. They came over almost every day on reconnaissance, seeking out the positions of batteries and individual guns, and, if at all suspicious, dropping bombs. Anti-aircraft guns were non-existent, and rifle-fire produced no result. The whole of the excavations in connection with our batteries had to be done at night, the newly turned earth being covered with grass and foliage by day.

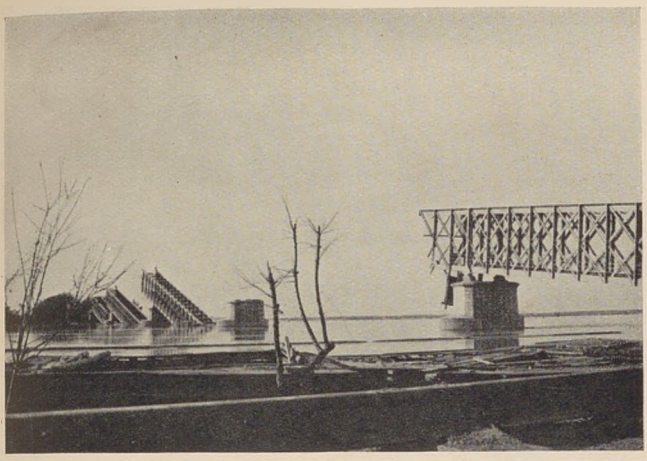
To make matters worse, the country lay under about a foot of snow. When the snow thawed the roads became rivers of mud and all movement was extremely slow.

When we finally got the guns into position we found several important parts were missing, the most vital being the telescopic sights. We wired for these immediately but knew they would take weeks to arrive.

Meanwhile artillery duels, chiefly of minor importance, took place between the Austrian and Serbian batteries every day. We often heard shells passing overhead

but none fell on the house. This activity decreased as the spring wore on. Occasionally, however, a really serious bombardment took place, Belgrade being badly damaged and the Serbs retaliating on Zemlin. Casualties were remarkably light. There was usually some very definite provocation for any such attack. For instance, one of the heaviest was the result of a royal prince going into the fortress and sniping a sentry at a peaceful Austrian post. That unfortunate effort brought us about one hundred heavy shells.

On 21st March a naval picket-boat, afterwards known as the "Terror of the Danube", arrived at Belgrade. There had been great difficulty in getting it through the Greek customs at Salonika, and afterwards under the low bridges and through the tunnels on the railway. It was an even harder task getting it into the water. The Frenchmen had promised to assist and we went out to Chukaritza, on the Save, at 8 P.M. and met them there; a large party of Serbs were also present. The attempt to launch the boat was begun at once. During the afternoon a temporary rail had been laid to the river-bank, a distance of about one hundred yards. The plan was first to run down the picket-boat, which was comfortably housed on one truck, and then disconnect the last length of the line and run a crane down alongside it. From that position the crane could hoist the boat right into the water. The idea was a good one but it did not work. By 10 P.M., toiling in complete darkness, not even the glimmer of a match being allowed, the boat was run down to the water's edge and the line disconnected. Attempts were then made to run



THE SAVE BRIDGE AS WE SAW IT

THE PICKET-BOAT JUST BEFORE LAUNCHING
(taken at dawn)

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the crane down, but it proved to be so constructed that its truck would not take a curve in the line and the two front wheels ran off. By 11 P.M. the crane had been manhandled back on to the line, but, further attempts to get it round the curve proving abortive, the operation was suspended at midnight. We had grave fears for the boat, as it was in full view of the Austrian position; we did our best to camouflage it with planks of wood and branches. It reminded me of the wooden horse before the walls of Troy.

A second attempt was made the following night, but, after the crane had run off the lines four times, we packed up till the morrow. Tempers were getting frayed and there was likely to be misunderstanding of sarcastic remarks translated into three languages.

In addition to general weariness most of us were bruised and sore as the result of the rough journeys between Chukaritza and Belgrade. We travelled in a heavy lorry, without lights, on a badly shell-holed road. Every few minutes a wheel would go into one of these holes with a sickening crash. After one such occurrence someone asked the whereabouts of "poor old Joe". Joe had disappeared. Half an hour later we stumbled across him on the side of a crater, completely knocked out. He had been catapulted out of the lorry when the off rear wheel had dropped, but, apart from pained surprise (not uncommon in the Royal Marines), there were no permanent ill-effects.

The French provided a break by taking away the crane to hoist out some aeroplanes which had arrived; we badly needed the latter to keep the Austrians away. Finally

we got that boat into the water at the fourth attempt. But she was in the Save and we wanted her in the Danube, where we had found a very snug little harbour quite concealed from enemy observation. To get there she had to steam round the whole peninsula on which the city stands. This also was safely accomplished on a very dark night, great care being taken to prevent sparks from the funnel.

At the end of the month the Crown Prince Alexander arrived and inspected the first of our batteries to be installed. As not only ourselves but the Serbian General and his whole staff accompanied the Prince on this visit, it was surprising that the Austrians did not spot us and open fire. Next day Kerr and I rode out fifteen kilometres to view the second gun position and found it all that could be desired—the guns commanding a big stretch of river on both sides. The positions of our batteries had most picturesque names: Velike Vrachar, Tcholin Grob, Tzigansko Brdo and Ostrujnitza.

Every day something interesting happened in the neighbourhood, and every morning, as regular as clockwork, a full report arrived from the "Command of the Defence of Belgrade" to the "Chief of the British Mission". These were translated for me by our liaison officer and I typed them out for the Admiral. I have kept a complete file of these and they make amusing, as well as interesting, reading. Here is a somewhat weird extract from the report of 31st March:

"At 11 P.M. last night a black object appeared on the

Danube, between the Island of Vintcha and the enemy's bank, having the shape of a small ship with what appeared to be a funnel in the bows. It floated slowly down the river without sound. On arriving opposite the Inn at the village of Vintcha two heavy explosions, closely following each other, emanated from it. Immediately after this a strong light, resembling Bengal light, appeared on it, which from time to time brightened or dimmed. When at its brightest sparks were seen flying from it. Floating down in this manner as far as the village of Ritopek it neared our shore, when the light was seen to suddenly brighten considerably, and immediately after a tremendous explosion occurred. The object blew up, pieces flying in all directions, and everything sank to the bottom of the Danube. During the time the object was floating from Vintcha to Ritopek our batteries on this side of the river opened a successful fire, several shells striking the object itself. Whether these hits provoked the explosion, or whether the explosion was previously prepared in it, was impossible to ascertain. It took the object three-quarters of an hour to float from Vintcha to Ritopek. Probably this was a specially prepared barge or raft floated down to provoke the fire of our batteries and disclose the position of our searchlights, and destroy any minefields over which it might pass. Should any further evidence or details become known they will follow.

"(*Signed*) M. Jivkovitch, Commandant-General.'

It was our Loch Ness monster!

And here is the official report of what seemed to me a most unpleasant affair on 6th April:

"At about 6 P.M. the enemy's howitzer battery, calibre 24 cm., placed in three separate sections on the Bejania ridge, commenced bombarding the town of Belgrade. The first shells fell in the vicinity of the Ministry of War and Ministry of Finance; one of these set fire to the Ministry of War; steps were at once taken to put the fire out. Orders were at once given to one of our howitzer batteries to open fire on the enemy's mortar battery and all other siege batteries were ordered to be ready to bombard Zemlin.

"As the enemy continued to fire on Belgrade, the shells falling in Great Milosh Street, near the restaurant Mali Voynik and the restaurant Ruski Tzar, and in King Peter Street, on the fortress, and in Dushan Street, orders were given to the French, Russian, and one of our howitzer batteries, to open fire on Zemlin with a limited number of shells.

"Owing to this the enemy divided his fire, shelling the town with two guns and the French battery with another two.

"At 7.15 the enemy ceased fire, and our fire ceased immediately after.

"During the whole of this time our captive balloon was making useful observations for the correction of our fire.

"Altogether between 20 and 30 of the enemy's shells

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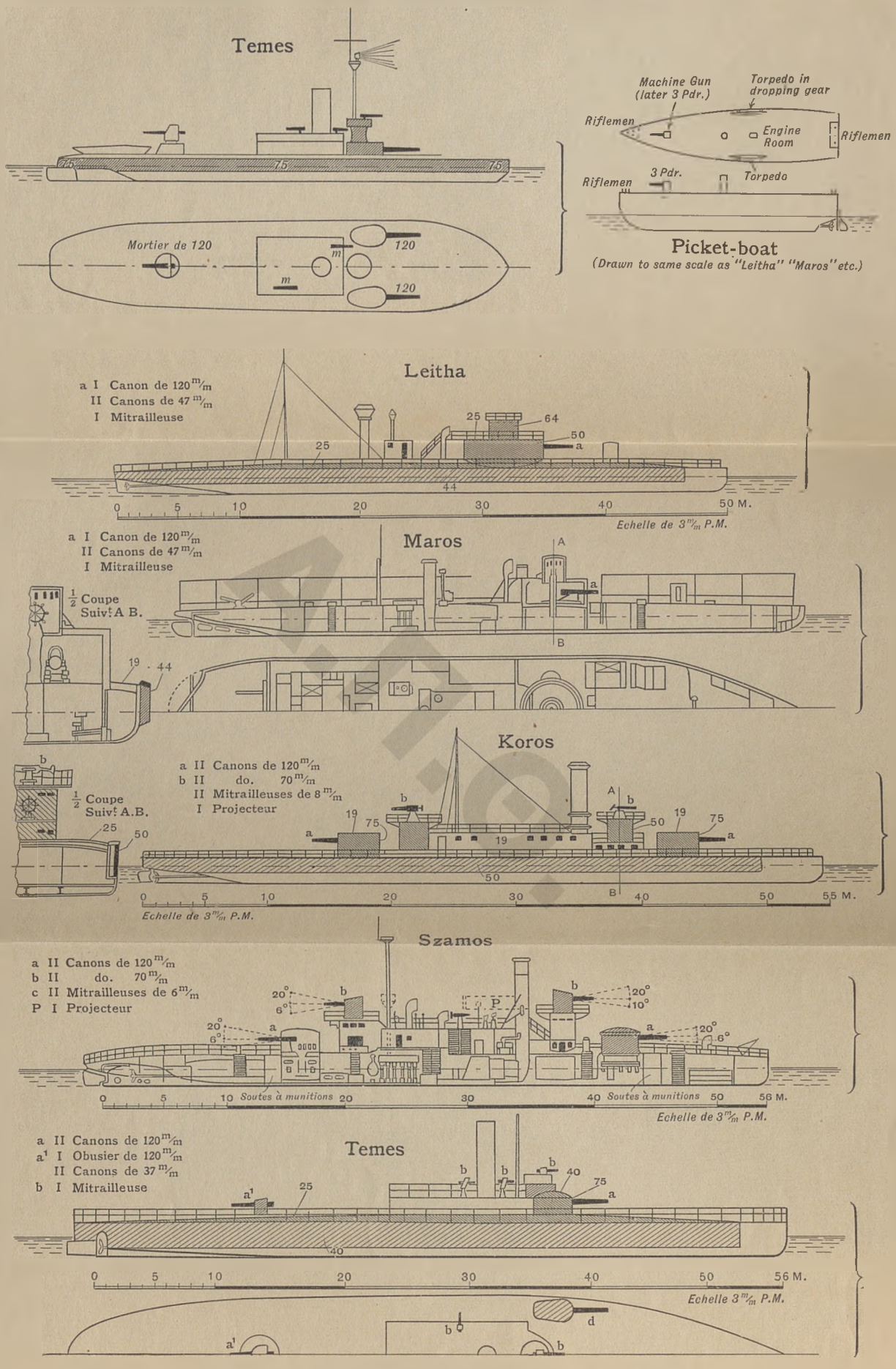


OUR FRIENDS THE ENEMY

Detailed sketches of the five Austro-Hungarian monitors employed in the bombardments of Belgrade (from details supplied by spies). One of these was sunk by the "Terror of the Danube".

fell on Belgrade. One of these demolished the small building, used as a shop for the sale of the convict's handiwork, in the upper fortress, killing two of our soldiers and slightly wounding the Commander of the 19th Infantry Regiment. A wagon driver was killed near the restaurant opposite the Military Academy. Detailed information as to losses in the town is not yet available. Altogether about 80 shells from heavy guns were fired into Zemlin."

The British Military Attaché, a colonel of the Regular Army, was in our house, in uncomfortable proximity to the Ministry of War, when the bombardments commenced. He had seen much active service and was of the opinion that the safest place was the cellar. The Assistant Military Attaché, a temporary captain (later to be a Cabinet Minister), thought British prestige demanded that the two officers should walk calmly down the main street to their hotel. The temporary captain's opinion prevailed, but I shall never forget the colonel's language when I called upon him at his hotel just after the shooting had ended.

Personally I was out after "souvenirs" and I got my fingers burned for my pains. It is only the uninitiated who pick up pieces of high-explosive shell just after they have fallen. We had several bursts within 200 yards of our headquarters.

I heard subsequently that among the civilian population one man and one woman were killed, four men and two women wounded: a surprisingly small total.

During the early part of April enemy monitors and

other craft were again reported to be massing above Zemlin, and it was believed an attempt would be made to rush the Belgrade defences and send munition ships down the river to Turkey. The latter, we knew, was getting very short of heavy shells in her defence of the Dardanelles. All of our eight 4·7″ guns were now in position to defeat any such attempt. In addition we had received a supply of 14″ torpedoes from Malta, for which special wooden torpedo-tubes had been designed by our Lieutenant of Marines. The tubes were anchored in pairs in hidden positions on the banks of the river and the torpedoes could be fired from a shelter trench some distance in the rear. A machine-gun was installed in the bows of the picket-boat, which was also fitted with special dropping gear carrying one torpedo on either side; these latter could, of course, only be fired straight ahead. The whole of our limited resources were, in fact, mobilised for any emergency.

On 21st April the picket-boat, with Kerr in command, made her first attempt to create a diversion in the enemy's camp. She left her anchorage at 10 o'clock on a dark and stormy night, passed through the mine-fields, proceeded unperceived past Zemlin, and from there steamed to a point beyond the monitors' usual anchorage. As luck would have it, however, the Austrians had chosen that night to shift their anchorage to find shelter from the storm (the Danube can get quite rough at such times) and Kerr wisely decided to return. No alarm had been raised, so presumably he had not been seen; and he had gained some very useful experience.

Two days later he repeated the attempt with complete success. He left his anchorage at the Klanitza about midnight, proceeded unnoticed past Zemlin, and sighted four monitors about five miles above the town. Both torpedoes were fired at one of the monitors, the first at 100 yards and the second at 30 yards range. The first hit and a muffled explosion was heard; the second ran deep and passed under the target. Heavy rifle and machine-gun fire was opened on the boat and she was repeatedly struck, but no damage done or casualties inflicted. About ten minutes later, as she returned down river at top speed, a tremendous explosion occurred among the monitors. The Zemlin defences failed to locate her as she passed, and she got back to Belgrade about 2 A.M.

Next day there were only three monitors lying above Zemlin. A week later the Austrian Press admitted that one of their monitors had been sunk by a mine. At Belgrade it was not known whether, in the confusion, the picket-boat had been identified at all. Kerr subsequently received the D.S.O. and several other members of the crew were decorated. The Serbs were very pleased. The following telegrams were exchanged:

"Voyvoda [Field-Marshal] Putnik to Head of British Naval Mission

"I congratulate you and send my great thanks to all Officers, Petty Officers, and men of Great Britain for their heroic enterprise shewn in their attack on the enemy's monitors.

"All who took part in this expedition have been proposed for decorations and medals."

"Rear-Admiral Troubridge to Voyvoda Putnik, Chief of the Headquarters staff

"I beg to thank you for your message of appreciation of the services of the officers and men under my command on the 21st and 23rd April.

"Such praise from so distinguished a Commander as yourself is doubly to be prized."

On 25th April an Austrian boat appeared between Kozhara Island and the left bank of the Danube. One of our batteries opened fire and at the fourth shell she beat a hasty retreat. This is recorded as being the first occasion in history that a British gun was fired by British troops in Serbia.

There was, of course, a lighter side to our lives. We had found, on arrival, an American hospital in the town where we were always welcome for a cup of tea. I varied this, on occasion, by going up to see the surgeons operate, but found I had no stomach for the job. Frostbite and gangrene following typhus formed the majority of cases, and I do not propose to describe the sights I saw.

Most of the cafés were in full swing, even if the menu was limited to a form of greasy hash and beer. There we met our Serbian colleagues and their more exciting comitadji friends. To be a comitadji was to be a hero in Serbia at that time. They flourished on the Bulgarian

and Albanian borders as did the moss-troopers in the Anglo-Scottish wars. They also had their own ideas of entertainment. I attended a dinner-party one night where revolvers were fired through the ceiling with the wine (we heard wild scampering overhead), and the fruit was served by maidens as naked as when they were born. And I was assured that this was quite a mild affair.

An American cinema operator appeared and I unwittingly found myself destined for the screen. I was out for a walk one afternoon near the fortress when I came upon him with a party of Serbian soldiers rehearsing an attack over a cluster of shell craters in the road. I did not know about his mate with the camera then. He asked me if I would lead the attack; he said it would be bully to have an English major in charge of Serbian troops. I said British officers did not stoop to such things. And as I walked down the street swinging my cane, he blew his whistle and the Serbs charged behind me with fixed bayonets. "Gee," he said, "they'll love that in America; the British officer refusing to run and armed only with a cane!" His name was Leo Varges. Only he could have supported such a name.

We found an old football and played one match each against the Serbians and the French. Then the ball was burst and we could find no other.

Attached to us was a Serbian Foreign Office official who was also a crack revolver shot. At Easter he challenged me to a competition, he with automatic at 12 yards and I with rifle at 25 (our back garden would not permit of longer distances). At the usual revolver and rifle targets we ended all square. Then hens' eggs

were suspended for him and pigeons' eggs for me. It was only when I had lost and paid the bet that I discovered a pigeon's egg had been blown.

Meanwhile a British Farmers' Hospital had arrived, and as the typhus waned the nurses had more time upon their hands. We took tea with them and showed them the sights of Belgrade. A nurse was produced with the same name as myself, and though we could prove no blood relationship we became official "cousins" right away. A trifling incident with another nurse I remember very well. We were walking down the main street and she was scoffing at the various superstitions that we sailors had. We came to some long ladders being used in connection with repairs to a shell-damaged roof. "You won't walk under those," she said, "but I will." She did, and was struck on the head by a falling brick. I carried her into hospital to have three stitches inserted in her scalp.

My duties at the office were by no means light—in fact I looked upon myself as the busiest officer in the force. In addition to being the Admiral's Secretary, with the administrative duties involved, I was the Paymaster and Victualling Officer as well. Stores would constantly go amissing and food was hard to get. Everything we required must come from Malta, and the sea journey to Salonika and thence the long transport overland were difficult to arrange. Our telegram log makes long and interesting reading; there is an element of ferocity in it at times. I made frequent journeys to Nish in an endeavour to trace missing gear and to maintain liaison with our Legation there.

They were very kind to me at Nish. I was made an honorary member of the Cercle Diplomatique and was assured of a good meal and a game of bridge at any time. One of these games nearly led to an international incident. I was playing, with the Minister for Belgium as partner, against the Minister for France and the Minister for Greece. All the calling was in French and my French was very rusty. It was explained to me that *cœurs* were hearts; *carreaux*, diamonds; *trèfles*, clubs; and spades were *piques*. I picked up an enormous hand of diamonds towards the end of the first rubber and called "Trois trèfles". The Minister for Greece went "Trois cœurs". I called "Quatre trèfles" and he said "Contre". "But," I thought, "he can't double four diamonds when I have ten of them; I must have called the wrong suit." So I tried "Quatre carreaux". To which he said "Contre" and I said "Sur-contre". I made a little slam. When he led from the ace and king of clubs I ruffed. "But," he cried, "he calls four clubs and he has no clubs. He bluffs. This is not bridge, but poker. How much do I owe?" We collected about £5 on that rubber and the Minister for Greece would never play with me again. On the way home the First Secretary of our Legation congratulated me on the coup. "But," I said, "it was all a mistake; I thought I was really calling diamonds till he doubled me, and then I switched." "Don't tell anyone," he said; "it's the best thing that has ever happened here. Greece is very unpopular anyway for sitting on the fence."

At the beginning of May our own naval hospital unit, organised by the Admiral's wife, arrived and was

installed in an empty school near our headquarters. Thenceforward our social life was assured.

During the three or four weeks they had been in position it had been our policy to keep our guns very quiet. We did not wish to give away their exact position. On 2nd May, however, itching to retaliate on an Austrian battery behind Zemlin, the Serbs ordered our two guns at Karabourma to open fire; fourteen common shells were fired. Next day, exactly what we had feared took place. The enemy had spotted the position and started a slow and deliberate bombardment of our battery. The shooting was extraordinarily accurate, the shell used being about 9". We evacuated the battery, and staff and guns' crew watched the fall of shot, seemingly in perfect safety, from a spot two or three hundred yards above. The danger space was very small, some of the shell exploding within a few yards of the guns without damaging them in any way; one of them had its muzzle filled with earth. Three of their shells did not explode, and several detonated badly. As a result we picked up several large pieces, including an undamaged base complete with fuse. As we made no reply, the enemy no doubt considered that the battery had been destroyed. That night we sent the guns back to Ostrujnitza and substituted dummies in their place.

The picket-boat was by no means inactive and I had, with some difficulty, obtained the Admiral's permission to accompany her as a volunteer. As a first-class marksman I was placed in charge of a small party of riflemen

in the bow. On 8th May we left our anchorage at 1 A.M. and went up-river with the intention of attacking the enemy's guard-boat, which had opened fire upon a previous occasion. We reached a point one mile above Zemlin, but saw no sign of her. Rifle- and machine-gun fire was opened to attract attention, but not a single shot was fired in reply. We returned to Belgrade rather mystified.

Before we could make another attempt the guard-boat was destroyed. Late one night a searchlight disclosed her presence opposite the fortress at Belgrade. She was engaged by the Russian battery, the second shot hitting her in the stern and setting her on fire. Two monitors, which dropped down-river to her assistance, were also engaged and we had a lively night of it. The whole of the naval and military population seemed to turn out for a show like this. A few nights later our picket-boat made a raid and removed all loose gear from the wreck. We sent her ensign to the Serbian General-in-Command.

At this period the picket-boat was moored, as convenient, on the Danube and Save sides of Belgrade. Manning her on the Danube was simple, as she lay alongside a jetty, but on the Save was an altogether different affair. There she was kept under the lee of a small boat-house within easy sight and hearing of the enemy sentries on the opposite bank. We had to cross the riverside trenches and creep along duckboards in black darkness without lights. In full equipment this was not easy. One of the less dignified episodes of my career was when, with my rifle slung across my back,

I attempted to jump a wide trench in the dark. I slipped and fell to the bottom on my back. My rifle became embedded in the mud and held me there. I dare not call out or the enemy sentries would be aroused. They found me like a "cast" sheep, wet and muddy and with my ribs badly bruised; nor were they pleased at the delay my disappearance had caused. Crossing the duckboards, with deep water on either side, was a nightmare of nervous tension after that.

By 30th May we had made five attempts on the monitors, with but the one success already recorded, and the enemy were getting very nervous. They were reported by the French aeroplanes to have constructed some form of boom below their anchorage, and we knew from experience that there was a regular system of guard-boats to block our passage beyond Zemlin. The advance patrol-boat appeared to be supported by a second guard-boat and a monitor higher up; and all made a habit of returning to their regular anchorage at 3 A.M.

The object of our latest expedition was to arrive off Chervenka Island unseen, at the same time as the patrol-boat returned up-river and, if possible, to torpedo her as she passed. If hit by the torpedo, but not sunk, we had instructions to attack with machine-gun and rifle-fire and attempt her capture or complete destruction. She was, however, a formidable opponent, being rather more than twice our size and very fast; she carried three machine-guns, in armoured towers forward, and had a crew of twenty-eight.

General Jivkovitch desired that one of his staff

officers, Captain Izaakovitch, should accompany the expedition, and this was agreed. To keep him out of Kerr's way he was put under my direction in the bows.

We left our moorings at Belgrade at 1.30 A.M. (after a good game of poker in which I had lost £7) and proceeded slowly up the river through the mines. There were three lines of these and, as each was reported in a hoarse whisper (no talking or smoking was allowed), Izaakovitch removed his heavy military great-coat and sword. He could not swim, poor chap, and it was a cold night. He had to choose between the possibilities of drowning in his coat or freezing with it off. Actually he spent most of the time taking it off and putting it on again.

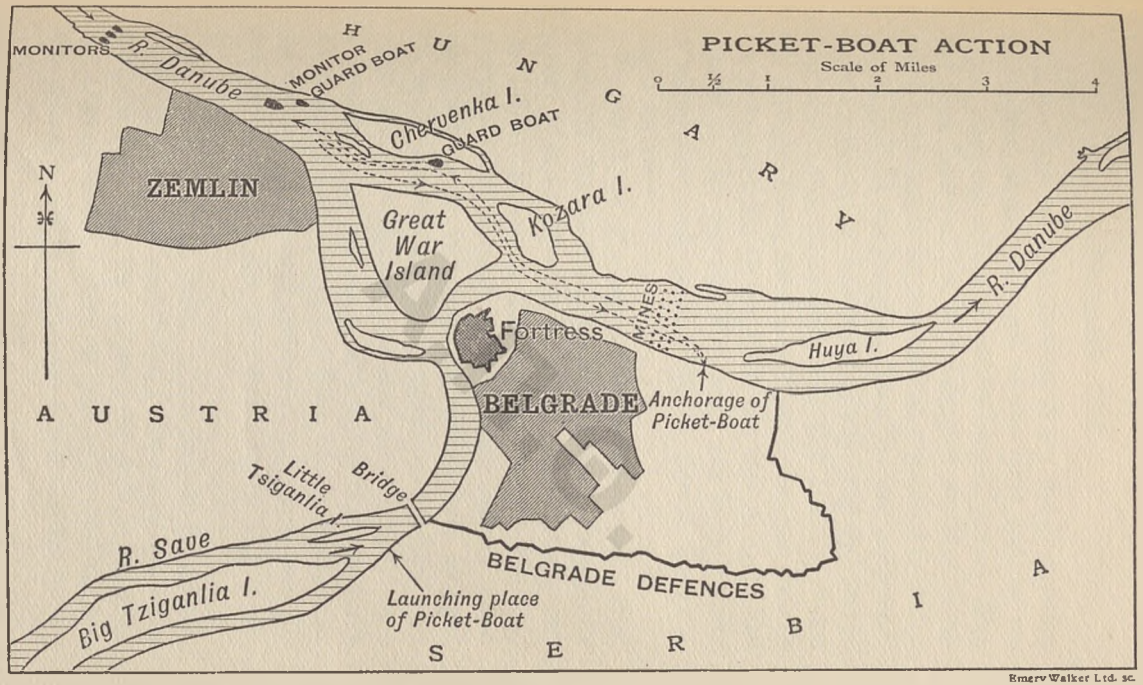
We continued our course up the river, going very slowly and frequently stopping engines to use our night-glasses and listen. At 3 A.M. we arrived off Chervenka Island. A whispered discussion then arose as to whether a dim shape some distance ahead was a patrol-boat or not. We were right under the trees near the enemy's bank and it was difficult to see; the moon was making it too light to allow us in the river channel. We had just decided that the shape was a shadow when, suddenly, a boat dashed out of the trees about 1000 yards ahead and raced up-river. We threw all caution to the winds and went full speed in chase. After going about half a mile we saw it was impossible to catch her, so stopped and looked round for something else. Signals from both sides started flashing and we knew we were discovered from both banks, but were not unduly

distressed, as on previous occasions there had been no guns at that point.

As there were no signs of any enemy craft, Kerr then fired six shots from his revolver into the air "to let them know we were there if wanted", and gave the order to swing the boat round and return. We had just got her head round and moved about a yard when everything seemed to happen at once. There was a terrific explosion in the stern sheets (a 6-pounder shell had wrecked them) and shell-fire and rifle-fire seemed to come from all directions.

We were so taken by surprise at this sudden outburst that I think everyone was only too glad to lie low and collect his wits. We then started rapid rifle- and machine-gun fire—firing at the enemy's flashes. There were four of us in the bows and two or three shells, fired from directly astern, seemed to pass right between our heads. The range was almost point-blank. Unfortunately for us the machine-gun jammed after firing a few rounds and we had to depend on rifles and revolvers alone. Our torpedoes were rather a source of fear than confidence as, had one been struck by a shell or bullet on the warhead, it would immediately have blown us up. Torpedoes were too scarce to loose off just for the sake of getting rid of them.

We were now proceeding full-speed down with the current, the range, which had been about 100 yards to start with, rapidly increasing. We were becoming a very difficult target. A monitor had come into action, as the splashes of what were evidently 6″ shell were unpleasantly close.



Emery Walker Ltd. sc.

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All this time we were passing down the Hungarian shore within about 50 yards of the trees and, as we passed, there was a continuous flashing of enemy rifles fired at us from this cover. I occupied my time firing back at these flashes but was not too engrossed to notice that Izaakovitch was jumping about like one possessed. In his excitement he was firing at anything and everything, and it became so dangerous that I had to order him to desist. Every time a shell or bullet just missed him he dropped flat on the deck, but was up again like a marionette. He was full of courage and forgot to take off his overcoat and sword when we passed the gateway in the mines.

We passed out of range of the enemy's guns after being under fire for about twenty minutes, though the monitor pursued us with 6″ shells till we finally ran under cover. It was as well we did, for we had a 1″ pom-pom bullet through the feed-tank and the speed was rapidly being reduced. We should have stopped long before, had not the plucky stoker put his hand over a hole in the circulating pipe and stopped the leak—at the expense of his hand, which was badly scalded. A man in the stern sheets had been knocked right out and was severely bruised and temporarily stunned. His first remark when I saw him was, "Is my face black, sir?" It was.

In addition to two holes in the feed-tank and circulating pipe we had been holed twice above and twice below the water-line. By a miracle the shell in the stern sheets had missed the steering gear or we should have been in a mess. There seemed no doubt that the enemy

had seen us for some considerable time before they opened fire. After carefully training all guns on us they had been content to let us run as far up-river as we would. The kick ahead of our engine, immediately after turning, had probably been our salvation.

Izaakovitch informed me that he had finished his sea career. The picket-boat was still under repair ten days after the affair.

I found that I had fired thirty-three rounds from my rifle during the action; it would be interesting to know with what result.

During the spring we had quite a number of important and interesting visitors. General Sir Arthur Paget, hero of the Curragh incident, had arrived from England to study the military situation, and his brother, Sir Ralph, had come up from Kraguevatz to discuss the whole question of hospitals and their location. Sir Alexander Ogston had stayed a short time in connection with the installation of the Naval Hospital Unit. I had been associated with a Mr. Morgan, an engineer, in the preparation of a report on the shipbuilding facilities available should the attack on the Dardanelles meet with success and the Danube be opened up for an Allied advance. The Rev. Percy Dearmer had come up from the interior and held special religious services for our men. We even had a flying visit from Sir Thomas Lipton, who had a Red Cross yacht in Salonika Bay. On our side we had made close contact with all the important Serbian officials, Army and civilian, at Belgrade, Kraguevatz and Nish.

ADMIRAL AND STAFF AT 4·7″ GUN-POSITION

THE PICKET-BOAT AFTER ACTION, 31ST MAY, 1915

А.П.О.

On all sides we found a supreme self-confidence among the Serbs. Their country had been invaded at the outbreak of war and they had thrown the enemy back. They had taken 80,000 prisoners. If they were invaded again they would do it again. When we asked them whether they really considered one single trench along the river's bank was sufficient to protect Belgrade, they laughed good-naturedly and said, "It is only you English and French who fight in trenches. If we see an enemy trench we take it. If the enemy attack one of ours we throw them back. A Serbian Army on Gallipoli would have been in Constantinople in twenty days." One day the Admiral sent me out to General Jivkovitch to demonstrate a trench periscope and to tell him that, if the Serbians wished, we would order 20,000 from home. The General, who was seated in a leafy hut in the garden of his headquarters, spent a pleasant afternoon putting the periscope round the door-post and startling approaching Staff officers by speaking to them before they actually appeared in sight. It became his inseparable plaything. He went into the town to take tea with a well-known hostess. When she apologised for her late appearance he said, "It is quite all right, Madame. I saw you bathing in your courtyard—by means of this little toy with which the English have presented me." My propagandist mission was a failure.

On 8th June I made my first flight in an aeroplane. This is the story:

As a result of our repeated reconnaissances and attacks

in the picket-boat on the enemy's monitors and patrol boats, we had compelled them to withdraw from their old anchorage behind Zemlin to Novi Banovtse, about three miles further up the Danube. It was reported that three monitors were lying here behind a strong boom. Each night they detached one monitor and two patrol boats to lie off Zemlin and intercept any attempt to attack those lying at their moorings. The object of my flight was to observe at close quarters the disposition of the enemy's craft and the nature of the boom if any.

I had the usual trouble to get the Admiral's permission to make the flight, but I knew he badly wanted the information. After some discussion he said he would on no account give me an order to go—I was his Secretary and what would the Admiralty, or my Mother, say if I did not return—but he would be very glad if I went. Giving him no opportunity to change his mind, the Liaison Officer and I motored out to the French flying ground at Banitza and explained the position to the Commandant. He at once saw the reasonableness of the request and placed one of his officers and a Farman biplane at my disposal. In reply to my urgent, but somewhat youthful, request to be allowed to take bombs to drop on the monitors, he said it was quite impossible, as he had the wrong sort of bombs with him, but that he expected a supply of the right kind shortly and I could apply again then. This was particularly interesting news to us, as we had wondered for some weeks why he did not bomb the enemy anchorage; but one cannot ask Allies leading questions of this kind.

I was called at 5.30 A.M. and, after a small breakfast (a wise precaution), I got my horse and rode out to Banitza. There I found Capitaine-Aviateur Larienty-Tholozan awaiting me. I again tried the bomb gambit,

but failed. It was a lovely morning, and I had left my great-coat at home. He was somewhat surprised at this and warned me I should feel very cold during the flight. He lent me a Balaclava helmet in place of my uniform cap and, having secured my camera and field glasses to my body, I got into the cockpit behind him. The machine was of the "pusher" type.

At 6.40 we started the engine and taxied over the ground straight for a belt of trees; about 50 yards before we reached them we left the ground and narrowly missed their tops. For the next hour we flew round the country, passing over our battery at Grotska, over Mount Avala (where are the Ancient Roman tin mines) and round by Topchider to Belgrade. All the time we were rising steadily—as indicated on an instrument at my feet—and were very comfortable except when the machine hit an air-pocket and "bucked" a good deal. Each time this happened Larienty looked round to see if I was scared. I was, but I took good care to appear either deeply interested in the altitude instrument, looking through my glasses, or taking a photograph of the country down below. Once we passed over a train; and followed it for some distance at 6000 ft., once over a military transport column, and once right over another aeroplane slowly rising from the ground. All these were extremely clearly visible and I felt we could have dropped bombs very close if not right on top of them. The panorama of the country, with the Danube on one side, the Save on the other, and Zemlin and Belgrade at the junction of the two, was very beautiful.

By 7.45 we had risen to 9000 ft. and Larienty turned round and shouted something. I could not hear what he said—the noise of the engine being terrific—but I gathered we were now all set to achieve the object of

the trip. We then set our course straight up the Danube and flew directly over Belgrade and Zemlin. We were both watching for shrapnel bursts—and once saw a cloud of smoke about 200 yards below, and another to the left—but were unable to hear the explosions owing to the noise of the plane. We had an excellent view of the enemy fortifications on Bejania Ridge, but shortly after ran into a belt of mist and the river became very indistinct. I found to my annoyance that my glasses were almost useless, owing to the lenses getting fogged, and I was now shivering with cold. About 7.55 we were directly over the boom and I got a good view of its construction. One monitor was lying on the lower side of it and three monitors above. After passing the boom Larienty turned for home and asked me whether I had seen all I desired. Much to his annoyance, I answered "No", so he turned again and we had another look. Then we made for home. When over Belgrade he stopped his engine and we gradually planed down to 6000 ft.; but when we came in sight of the flying ground he saw a signal to the effect that an Austrian aeroplane was up after us, and I discovered that we had not got a gun in the machine. I suggested to him that we should take off our boots, to throw in an emergency, and was just enjoying the joke when he had his revenge and gave me the biggest fright of my life. He suddenly tilted the machine without warning and went down in a spiral descent. I thought he had made a mistake, as I should certainly have fallen out of my seat had I not been strapped in, the tilt being tremendous and the earth rushing up on one side. I put my feet up to keep my position, and he evidently saw I was beaten and said it was quite all right; he also apologised profusely for not having warned me. We spiralled down about 5000 ft.

in half a minute and he then righted the machine and we glided down to the flying ground. It was a really beautiful landing.

After getting out of the machine I was sick for half an hour and deaf for nearly twelve. But the information, sketches and photographs were well worth it.

The above account was written at the time and may interest or amuse. In fairness to myself it must be remembered that it was my first flight and that biplanes were not too safe early in 1915.

On a later occasion I went up with Louis Paulhan —one of the pioneers of aviation; I think he won the first air race in England, before the War. We were chased by two Austrian machines and ran for home. Next day I ventured to expostulate with him about this business of running away.

"Fitch," he said, "I am Paulhan. All the world knows Paulhan. I have won every decoration that I desire. I am a first-class aviator and a courageous one. I obey orders. When you say 'right' I turn right; when you say 'down' I come down. But when you say 'stop and fight two enemy machines with a young officer who knows nothing about fighting in the air, I say 'No, I am not a bloody fool'."

He was right but I thought him a little brutal at the time. At a later date his country made the *amende honorable* when they gave me the Croix de Guerre with silver star ("Pour l'entrain, l'activité, et le mépris de danger dont il a fait preuve au cours de la campagne de Serbie dans la Mission Navale dont il faisait partie").

Meanwhile, during the second part of April and the whole of May, I had been doing more riding than I had ever done in my life. I made it a rule to visit all four batteries at regular intervals to see that the men were comfortable, that their food was good (we supplemented the Serbian ration with provisions of our own), and that they had sufficient to spend. As one of the batteries was twenty, and another thirty, miles from Belgrade, such visits usually necessitated staying the night. In any case the Serbian officer in charge always made a great fuss of me, drilled his guns' crews and generally treated it as an official inspection. A little reading up of the gunnery handbooks covered any lack of specialist knowledge from which I otherwise would have suffered. These visits had the added advantage that they kept me in close touch with the men personally; they told me their home troubles and made any necessary arrangements about their pay. For the most part they were extremely happy, the only serious grouse I ever heard being that the Navy tobacco we supplied was often mouldy. As a pipe smoker myself I shared their bitterness over this, the trouble being that Macedonian tobacco was only suitable for cigarettes. Why the Navy tobacco went mouldy during the first year of the War I have never been able to find out.

In addition the Admiralty had asked us, early in April, to supplement any information they had regarding the availability of tugs and lighters on the Danube. It was the old idea of sending troops up the Danube from the Black Sea after the capture of the defences to the Dardanelles and the elimination of Turkey from the

War. They wanted the number and nationality of the craft afloat, their draught and capacity, and the names of suitable and trustworthy agents for hiring or requisitioning them; also what means were available for fitting them for the transport and landing of troops, and the local facilities for carrying out such work. They wanted full information as to disembarkation facilities at the river towns above the Iron Gates—such as Belgrade, Smederevo and Shabatz. All enquiries were to be kept very secret, and the preparation of the report entailed a vast amount of work for me. The reason I had to do it was that no other officer was available. Our total of commissioned officers was only five. There were Kerr and myself on the Staff—and Kerr was occupied with his picket-boat and guns—Major Elliott and Captain Bullock of the Marines—busy with the torpedoes and mines, especially as the dry weather came and the river dropped—and Surgeon-Lieutenant Merewether, who spent most of his time inoculating and vaccinating us against every known complaint. He had his reward in the negligible amount of sickness among our small force.

The doctor and I made many of our riding expeditions in company and I fear I had a great deal of fun at his expense. In spite of a certain amount of experience at home and at Gibraltar I have never had a good seat; he rode like a sack of potatoes. I remember very well a particular expedition to the Save Bridge. This was the railway bridge from the neighbourhood of Belgrade to the Austrian shore, which had been blown up at the outbreak of War. A military post was established at either end, and we were warned that the

road along the river-bank was dangerous. We went to try it out. As soon as the enemy opened fire I put spurs to my horse and fled for dear life. Merewether thundered alongside. He had lost both his stirrups and his reins, and was hanging on by the saddle and the horse's mane; and all the time he was shouting to me to stop while he got his feet into his stirrups again.

On another occasion Kerr and I took the doctor on to a flat common near Topchider with the deliberate intention of seeing him thrown off. We got into line and started at a mad gallop across the plain. The first obstacle was a military trench and I rode straight into it and that was the end of me. My horse was wall-eyed on both sides. Kerr got a telephone wire under his chin and was nearly decapitated, and that was the end of him. Merewether went on—all arms and legs—but he was the only one in the saddle at the end. He was a good fellow. I could never make out why so many cavalry horses in Serbia were wall-eyed.

Whenever I visited our battery at Tzigansko Brdo (the Hill of the Gypsies) I stayed at the house of the mayor of Grotska, the nearest town. On the first occasion I was startled at the entry of the mayor's beautiful daughter, who asked permission to take off my field boots and bathe my feet. I told her I could not dream of such a thing and she rather disconsolately went away. When I mentioned it to my interpreter he said I had made a grave mistake; it was a custom of the country, and both the mayor and his daughter would feel insulted at the rebuff. I made my apologies, and on all future occasions it was done as a matter of course. Another

national custom was to greet the visitor with *slatko*, or sweet preserves. However hot and tired and dusty I might be, I was ushered into the common room, and there we went through the formality of eating *slatko* from a spoon, and drinking water, before rest could be taken or business be discussed. I should perhaps explain that each person had a separate spoon and a separate glass of water, but dipped from the common pot. The Serbs are an intensely hospitable race. When they become intimate friends they make one *nabité ognishté*, which gives the absolute right to the fireside seat for evermore.

As the summer wore on, military activity became less and less and we drowsed in the intense heat. Only occasional incidents occurred to disturb the peace.

Despatch writing, from being a solemn and almost sacred rite, tended to become a curse. All the exciting things had been said and all the really useful information given; we were hard put to it to gather fresh material for the entertainment of "Their Lordships" at home. The Admiral and I went "into retreat" on such occasions whilst we wrangled over the construction of sentences and the relative importance of facts. His temper became a little frayed; my manner unnecessarily formal. Driven to desperation, one afternoon I marched down into the town and bought a dummy bottle of ink and a large enamelled blot. Whilst the Admiral was out of the room for a few minutes I arranged the overturned bottle and blot across the middle page of the almost finished despatch.

Then I also left the room. A few minutes later a tornado struck the house. A door jerked open and an infuriated Admiral stood cursing in the hall. Who had done this thing? Who had ruined his despatch? What clumsy lout had been into his room? Where was his fool of a Secretary and why had he not stayed on guard? Three of us ran to face the music and none detected the lie. I suggested that we might save the other pages if we carefully lifted the damaged one and poured the liquid back into the pot. We did so, with infinite care, and the blot moved in one piece. Then I thought it wiser to disappear again. An hour later the Admiral sent for me and demanded that I buy two sets of bottles and blots to send home to his son. They caught the same mail as the despatch.

On 9th June, at dawn, two enemy aeroplanes dropped bombs on Kraguevatz but failed in an attempt to blow up our only arsenal. It was thought they must have mistaken Mrs. Stobart's hospital unit for a camp, as several bombs were dropped on it and twelve casualties reported. My friends at the French aviation station were informed by wire and a Frenchman intercepted an Austrian on his return. After a running fight the Austrian was put down, dropping nearly 10,000 feet after he was hit. Three hours later another Frenchman flew over and photographed the remains. Like Red Indians they believed in having evidence of their kills.

On the afternoon of 10th June seven enemy boats, containing about ten soldiers each, were observed in the Kozhara Channel. Eleven shrapnel were fired from

our side. One boat was sunk, two reached the enemy bank, and four took refuge in the trees.

Our battery was in action at Tcholin Grob. Three enemy batteries were engaged with good results. They replied with about a hundred shells, mostly overhead. We were informed that the "precise" shooting of our guns was much appreciated at Serbian headquarters.

On 18th June King Peter sent me his Order of the White Eagle.

Ever since the Serbians reoccupied their capital in December 1914, they had been much troubled by Austrian spies. It was thought that the enemy had left a trail of agents and secret telephones behind them. During the whole of the spring and summer spy scares were fairly frequent and we received several warnings from headquarters that the life of the Admiral was in definite danger. As a result Kerr and I made it a rule never to let him walk abroad alone and, as an additional precaution, we slept with loaded revolvers under our pillows at night. I think I have already mentioned that we had a guard of Serbian soldiers—a sergeant, a corporal and six privates—who lived in the kitchen quarters of the house. In the front were two bedrooms, one for the Admiral and the other shared by Kerr and myself. Next door to us was the dining-room or mess—a favourite spot for evening sing-songs, though I still could not sing in tune.

One night, about 1 A.M., just when I was dozing off to sleep, I thought I heard something move in the dining-room. I started up and listened, but could hear

nothing further, and sank back on the pillow—hardly breathing. Then it came again, quite clear this time, and a sound as though the piano keys had been touched. "Ah," I thought, "a spy! He has got through the window, is in the dark, is feeling his way to the door, and on his way has touched the piano." Noiselessly I crept out of bed, loaded revolver in one hand, barefooted, hardly breathing—trying to pretend I was not scared and too proud to waken Kerr to come with me. I slithered out of our room into the darkness of the hall, and from there silently, stealthily, into the doorway of the dining-room, gun raised in one hand, the other feeling for the switch. The light clicked on, and I stepped sideways in case anyone fired. Not a sound, and nothing moved. Slowly I hunted under the table, in the press, under the sideboard. Then, with a swish, a large black cat leapt off the piano right against me and vanished through the door into the garden.

The relief was tremendous and I chased after the cat down the hall and into the garden, more as a relief to my feelings than anything else. I laughed at myself. Fancy being frightened by a cat! Then I realised that the gravel was hurting my bare feet, and that I was very cold, and I walked back into the house. I had left the light on in the dining-room. It was out. Who had switched it out? There *was* a spy there after all. He must have been behind the door, and now he was waiting for me. Slowly, very slowly, I edged to the dining-room door—my revolver at the ready, the other hand feeling along the wall for the switch. Flip! on came the lights, and I jumped forward with my finger literally

А.П.О.

THE AUTHOR

BELGRADE, SE

HIS FIANCÉE

PTEMBER 1915

trembling on the trigger—and there, a yard away, I was looking down the barrel of Kerr's revolver. Luckily neither of us fired.

Then we burst into unnecessarily loud laughter, and sat down and ate a ham and drank several bottles of beer while we told each other what had happened. He had been asleep and had awakened to hear someone creeping about the garden (the back door standing open owing to the heat). He had crept out of bed, not wanting to awaken me, had switched off the light in the dining-room and waited for my shadow to appear in the doorway before he fired. *Had* either of us fired, with fatal results, it is interesting to speculate as to what would have been the fate of the survivor. I suppose they would have said we had quarrelled about a woman.

There *was* a woman who would have been well worth quarrelling about. A particularly charming V.A.D. had some time before joined our hospital, and recently I had become aware of her existence. I became more and more interested as the summer wore on and in September we became engaged. She has been my constant companion for twenty years.

As the heat and burden of the work declined, in fact, so did our social activities increase. We had tea fights; we went for riding-picnics; we did our courting in an ancient cemetery overlooking the Danube on moonlight nights. We gambled heavily. Poker parties with the American orderlies at the hospital sometimes went on all night. I still have a vision of the stately white figure

of the matron surprising us on one such occasion. She stood in the doorway of the common room at 6 A.M. and she did not need to speak; shamefacedly we slunk home to bed. Unfortunately I was caught by the Admiral getting back through my window and I felt he always regarded me as a bit of a rip after that. I could not say where I had been without giving the others away.

I often wondered what our official liaison officers thought of us at work and play. Three English-speaking Serbs occupied the position in turn and we got on excellently with them all. On arrival we had found Captain Milosh Petronijevitch in possession and he soon became "Uncle Milosh" to Kerr and me. He had occupied an important position at the Serbian Court in the time of the Obrenovitch dynasty, and had narrowly escaped the same fate when King Alexander and Queen Draga were murdered in 1903. It had been a gruesome business. Alexander and Draga had hidden in a secret passage behind the wainscoting in their bedroom and nearly escaped with their lives. At the last moment, when the rebels were at their wits' ends and the loyal troops were marching to the palace, one of the officers had stuck his sword into the wall and unluckily impaled the Queen's arm. She screamed, and that proved fatal. I always understood that Petronijevitch was also in that passage, or one near by. He had been to every Court in Europe, spoke many languages fluently, and was a wonderfully interesting companion at all times. He was succeeded for a short time by Lieutenant John Djuritch, a professor at the University of Belgrade. He occupied many important

diplomatic posts at a later date. Captain Milan Yovitchitch was the third—the product of a Serbian father and a Scottish mother, a dashing cavalryman, a favourite with all, and an excellent link with the Serbs. He stayed with us until the end.

On 20th July an unfortunate accident happened to our precious picket-boat. A 3-pdr. gun had recently been fitted in place of the old machine-gun, and at 9 P.M. she was manned preparatory to an attack on the enemy patrol-boat off Zemlin. She left her moorings at midnight, but shortly after struck a sunken wreck in mid-stream and was badly holed aft. She was kept afloat for three hours, being buoyed by pulling boats; the lashings then carried away and she sank by the stern, the bows remaining on the wreck and just above water. During the time she floated the gun, torpedoes and ammunition were removed.

Salvage operations were taken in hand by the Serbs, but it was a slow business as everything had to be done at night. Barges were moved to the scene of the disaster (it *was* a disaster to us) and slings passed under the stern. A small winch was found and after two nights' work she was floating on an even keel. She had a plank badly torn forward and another aft. Improvised collision mats were fixed and she was towed away for overhaul and repairs.

About the same time we lost two torpedoes from the wooden tubes. One was fired involuntarily by a Serbian who caught hold of the lanyard to prevent himself slipping into the river; the other was lost in a

storm. The Major of Marines went over in a pulling boat and searched the opposite bank without success. I volunteered to swim over and do a little mudlarking, but the Admiral would not hear of it. Neither was recovered and we were very distressed about the loss.

On 23rd July three of the enemy's planes dropped thirteen heavy bombs upon the city. It was our first serious aerial bombardment and a good deal of damage was done. One man and three women were killed. The Frenchmen went up to chase off the enemy and one of the attacking planes was brought down. They then went on and dropped exactly thirteen bombs on the other side as a reprisal. These reprisals were rather like Corsican vendettas and no man could say when they would end.

Meanwhile the Austrians were again reported to be preparing an expedition to run munitions down the river to Turkey, and we were asked to do all we could to prevent it. We sent a party down to Smederevo to lay a new minefield, and a deputation to the arsenal at Kraguevatz to press for the manufacture of more mines. The river was now very low and, as mines came to the surface, the enemy sank them by light artillery and machine-gun fire. They were also busy floating down heavy logs and old barges in an effort to foul and explode the mines. Our information was that the Austrians had constructed at Budapest four heavily armed and armoured ships with special apparatus for lifting mines. These, added to the five monitors and six armed patrol-boats at Zemlin, would make a very formidable force. Our counter measures were to be

more minefields and better mines, more floating torpedo tubes, and the concentration of our 4·7″ naval guns. In this latter connection the battery on the Save River was brought round to Belgrade. At the same time the Admiral sent me up in a French plane to carry out a complete reconnaissance of the enemy movements on the river below Belgrade. I was up three hours, and brought back details and sketches of the enemy craft opposite Smederevo and in the Tamish canal. We were quite sure something big was preparing, but we could have no idea when the blow would fall.

On 28th July, the anniversary of the outbreak of war between Serbia and Austria, the Crown Prince Alexander issued the following picturesque and inspiring Order of the Day:

"Warriors:

"With to-day ends a long and bloody, but great and historical year. It is just a year ago since the wild hordes of the Vienna Emperor marched to destroy and kill everybody and everything Serbian—even our mothers, sisters, wives and children—and with the intention of making of our country a vast ash-heap and cemetery for the sole reason that it is the cradle of all Serbians.

"However, this sworn and greatest enemy, whose forces greatly outnumbered our own, who was better conditioned and more prepared than we, was met on this side of the Drina and Save by my valiant warriors who had fought at Kumanovo, Monastir, Adrianople, Skutari, Bregalnitza and

Vidin. Serbian muscles, Serbian guns, and Serbian rifles with their sharp bayonets, succeeded once again in performing their duties gloriously and victoriously.

"In the battles, the like of which history has never known, at Yadar, Zer, Subovor, Kolubara, Kablar, and round Belgrade, much noble blood was shed. However, the immense Austrian forces were broken and annihilated.

"Warriors! Thanks to your more than human efforts and deeds performed during these trying days, we have saved our country from being overrun by the Austrian hordes, and have given obvious proof of our loyalty and preparedness to our great and noble Allies, and have shewn that we are ready to assist them to the utmost in the great common cause.

"The great appreciation and praise which has been accorded to the Serbian Army by our mighty Allies is accompanied by every kind of assistance possible.

"Nevertheless, whilst bloody battles are still being fought on the fields of Russian Poland and Galicia, and on the frontiers of France, Italy and Belgium, in order to achieve the Allies' end, our work in the War is not yet over and we cannot yet sheath our swords.

"Our great duties to all that is Serbian call us to continue the performance of our duties to our country and to our Allies until the end of this terrible war.

"Warriors! In calling upon you to be ready every moment to perform fresh noble deeds, which will bring us new honour, I consider it my duty to inform you in the name of our Country, to-day, that you have nobly performed your military and national duty in the course of this bloody year, and that I have the fullest assurance that you will always bear in mind that you alone are the hope of our Country and the down-trodden Serbian race.

"I am proud to have an Army composed of such heroes and I cannot allow this day to pass without sending you my heartiest greetings.

"Long live my brave Warriors: Long live my brave Officers, my Non-Commissioned Officers, my Corporals, and Privates.

ALEXANDER"

Another bombardment of Belgrade took place on 12th August; they must have thought we were grouse. Just after lunch, for no apparent reason, two enemy 5" howitzers opened fire. General Jivkovitch immediately gave orders for the French and Russian batteries to bombard Zemlin, firing two shells for every one of the enemy's; also for ten shells to be fired into the town of Panchevo. Twenty-two high explosive shells, chiefly French 6", were fired into Zemlin and the town was set on fire. The population of Panchevo were seen to be streaming out of the town and along the country roads. During the afternoon our battery at Tcholin Grob was heavily engaged. Over one hundred heavy shrapnel

were fired at it, three shells actually striking one of the casemates and bursting in or at the entrance. A long report from the Serbian Battery Commander ended with the following words: "The two English gunlayers showed unusual bravery and coolness in to-day's action, both of them laying their guns accurately although quite aware that they were absolutely exposed to the enemy's shrapnel fire, never changing their conduct even when the shrapnel bullets were flying all round the guns. For their proved bravery in to-day's engagement with the enemy I recommend that both the gunlayers be awarded the silver medal for bravery." The battery would probably have been wiped out had the Austrian ammunition been of better quality; a great many of the enemy rounds burst badly or did not burst at all. Another curious fact reported was that many of the enemy shrapnel burst early in the air, the fuses exploding again when they hit the ground. The same battery was again heavily bombarded on the following day; their accurate shooting had evidently made them very obnoxious to the enemy.

I should perhaps explain that the petty-officer gunlayer, the sightsetter, and two seamen gunners were the only English ratings attached to each gun, there being thus seven or eight Englishmen in each battery. The Serbian personnel consisted of two officers, twenty N.C.O.s, fifty privates and orderlies, and fifty-seven drivers—about one hundred and thirty in all. During the course of the year our casualties were surprisingly light: six Serbians and one English rating killed; thirty-one Serbians and six English ratings wounded.

When we first arrived in Serbia in January we had been told, both at Nish and Belgrade, that Bulgaria was not to be trusted and would strike us in the back immediately she felt it safe to do so. British diplomats in Sofia thought otherwise and expressed great hopes of bringing in Bulgaria upon our side. We were living with the Serbs and I suppose we assimilated their point of view; at any rate we felt our people in Sofia were being fooled.

Had the Allies permitted, Serbia would have secured her flank by attacking and cleaning up Bulgaria in the spring, when Austria and Germany had their hands full elsewhere. They were quite confident they would have been in Sofia in fourteen days. Alternatively, had the Allies sent to Serbia in the summer the six divisions which went to swell the slaughter and stress the failure at the Dardanelles, Bulgaria would have been curbed and Greece would almost certainly have come in at once on our side. As things were, Serbia had a sullen and menacing neighbour along her eastern border during the whole of that first year.

By the end of August the Anglo-French attack on the Dardanelles appeared to be failing and Bulgaria showed increasing signs of restlessness. The Serbs withdrew divisions of troops from the Save and around Belgrade and strengthened the Army Corps facing the Bulgar lines. Then Von Mackensen was reported to be at Zemlin planning an Austro-German attack. The Serbs did not know which frontier to strengthen most. That queer atmosphere of "waiting for the blow" brooded over us.

The Admiral called on King Peter at Topola and was shown the family tomb.

September passed with both sides "feeling" for the other. Aeroplane reconnaissance increased; batteries were provoked to fire to give away their position and the latest ranges recorded on the charts; all sorts of objects were floated down the Danube in the hope of destroying as many as possible of our mines. Big enemy movements of troops and commissariat wagons were observed on the other side, and flat-bottomed boats appeared in river-mouths and canals which had previously been empty of such things. We heard that the Germans had published a manifesto in Bulgaria declaring that the punishment of the hated Serbia would not now be long delayed. Two German army corps and three Austrian divisions were reported on our northern front—but Von Mackensen had been replaced by Von Lissengen. We were a little relieved to hear that Mackensen had gone.

On 4th October we were informed that the Serbs had called upon Bulgaria to demobilise immediately but could scarcely hope for a favourable result.

On 6th October the blow fell.

CHAPTER XV

THE SERBIAN RETREAT

(*From my Diary*)

October 6th, 1915. At about 10 A.M. the enemy commenced a systematic bombardment of our positions in and around Belgrade. As far as could be seen from the explosions every calibre of gun was firing, from 30 cm. howitzers, using high explosive shell, to field guns firing shrapnel. The enemy brought a very large number of guns to bear, both along the Save and the Danube, and were assisted in their spotting by the active use of aeroplanes. These latter were fired upon by Serbian anti-aircraft guns without effect and, owing to the French planes having been removed to the Bulgarian frontier, we had nothing useful with which to attack them.

By 11.30 A.M. the bombardment had become very general and the fortress, Danube Quay, Topchider Hill and Velike Vrachar (where was our Marines' battery) were receiving particularly heavy punishment. Being hopelessly out-gunned, the Serbs decided not to reply to this fire and most of their batteries were temporarily evacuated to save the lives of the personnel. Neither the French on Topchider Hill, nor our own guns on Velike Vrachar, fired a shot and the guns' crews were withdrawn under cover.

We now feel severely the loss of the Serbian howitzer batteries which were removed last week to the Bulgarian

front—the Russian, French and English guns being the only ones left.

About noon the enemy's fire slackened somewhat, but, at about 1 P.M. gradually recommenced until it became far more violent than before. As the afternoon wore on the enemy commenced firing indiscriminately into the town, and the banks of both rivers were thoroughly searched with high explosive and shrapnel. The Admiral who was, with me, watching the firing from the neighbourhood of the American Hospital, estimated that about five shell explosions occurred in every second. About this time the buildings in the town were suffering very heavily and the civilian population were evacuating as quickly as possible, without any real panic; indeed the stoicism which they displayed was really most extraordinary under the circumstances. They streamed past us carrying gear, and with precious household goods on old carts, dodging the shell holes in the road, with a look of resigned fortitude on their faces. Heavy loss of life was reported from various quarters in the city and large numbers of wounded were taken to the hospitals.

During the afternoon the Admiral received a message from Army Headquarters at Torlak, about six miles out, requesting him to be ready to evacuate our own Headquarters at any moment, and we made every possible preparation for doing so. Major Elliott was instructed to prepare to bury our mining and torpedo gear should the necessity arise.

About 5 P.M. Sergeant Bolton, R.M.L.I., who had been sent to the Save bridge with orders for the men on watch over our minefields and torpedoes there, was reported to be lying seriously wounded in the head. Merewether was sent to render assistance, but returned

at 8 P.M. with the news that he was dead. His body was sent to the American Hospital for burial.

As darkness fell the enemy's fire slackened, and from about 7 P.M. onwards only one or two guns were firing. They seemed to have no special target and shells were still falling in the town. A particularly large fire near the Cathedral caused a big glare in the sky during the dark hours.

At midnight our posts on the Danube and Save were still intact. The battery at Velike Vrachar was also ready for action when required.

October 7th. About 1 A.M. very heavy rifle, machine-gun and light artillery fire was heard from the direction of Tziganlia Island and the fortress. This fire was very violent for over an hour, and then eased somewhat, but continued less violently during the whole night.

About 8 A.M. the Admiral received a message from General Jivkovitch desiring him to leave Belgrade with his staff and to join the General's staff at Torlak. The Admiral and Yovitchitch immediately left by motor car, and I followed in a horse carriage with the official archives and my personal gear. Kerr joined Elliott at the Barracks and they put in hand the burial of our torpedo and mining stores. This work was completed by 4 P.M. on the same day.

On arrival at Torlak we found the general position along the front to be as follows: The enemy had, contrary to the general expectation, made a frontal attack upon Belgrade. The Germans had effected a landing on Tziganlia Island with about 1500 men and were held up there; in fact, headquarters had hopes that they might be cut off and forced to surrender. Austrian troops had been floated down from Zemlin on pontoons, protected by the monitors, and had landed on Danube

Quay and at the Kalimegdan, just outside the fortress. These, also, were held up by Serbian troops. In fact Headquarters claimed that, at the time of our arrival, the whole of these latter forces had been shot down or captured, with the exception of two companies who were still defending themselves on Danube Quay, but whose extermination was only a matter of hours. We were also informed that the enemy had attempted a crossing at Smederevo, but had been beaten back. Torlak estimated that during the last 24 hours 48,000 shell had been fired by the enemy on the section from Grotska to Ostrujnitza, 12,000 being fired on the Belgrade sector alone.

On our arrival we found 20 German prisoners at Torlak, and 100 Austrian prisoners were marched in about noon. The Serbs estimated that their total number of prisoners was then 250.

During the day two Marines from our Velike Vrachar battery were received into hospital wounded. They reported that the battery had been very heavily bombarded by howitzers, and one gun put out of action; the other gun was still firing and they believed the damaged one would be again brought into action later. They also reported having done considerable damage to enemy monitors off Kozara Island, one being forced to retire altogether.

At midnight the situation was as follows: The enemy on Tziganlia Island were still heavily engaged with the Serbian defenders, who were now only holding the two bridge-heads. The Serbs on Little Tziganlia Island had been practically wiped out by enemy gunfire. The enemy troops on Danube Quay had been reinforced and heavy fighting was proceeding. Our posts at the Save Bridge and Strugara were still intact, except that a shell had

cut the mine cable at the bridge and rendered the gun-cotton charges there—for defence against the passage of monitors—innocuous.

The General informed Admiral Troubridge that our battery at Velike Vrachar had, so far, saved the situation at Danube Quay in that it had prevented the monitors from giving proper support to the troops there.

This night a division of Serbian troops, believed to be about 20,000 men, arrived and took up position on Banovo Hill, besides sending reinforcements into the town.

October 8th. Early A.M. it was reported that, during the night, the enemy had landed large reinforcements at Danube Quay and on Tziganlia Island, and that the situation had changed in their favour. They were now in complete occupation of the Island and it had been found necessary to scuttle the whole of the Serbian flotilla of armed boats, including our picket-boat. A sad ending for the "Terror of the Danube"—destroyed by her own friends. The enemy were also making headway against the Serbian troops in the town.

Yesterday every Russian gun was put out of action in the fortress and the whole of their torpedo posts destroyed. As a result the Russian Mission was evacuated and joined us at Torlak. They left today for the interior to await developments.

In view of this position of affairs it was decided that the British Naval Mission must also evacuate Belgrade, with any movable stores, men only being left to man the posts at Danube Quay and the Save bridge. I was sent in on horseback at 8 A.M. with the necessary orders, and by noon had got them all out. There were 80 gallon jars of rum in the Barracks and a Chief Petty Officer and I destroyed the lot. I shall never forget the men's faces

when I gave my decision and I had not the heart to order *them* to do it. I took the opportunity of calling at the hospital and giving them the news. I found them wonderfully calm. My offer of my revolver to my fiancée, in case she met an unpleasant Boche, was refused. It was a ticklish business riding in the town, as firing seemed to be going on round the corner of every street —a steady drum fire with exact direction difficult to fix.

Our battery from Grotska arrived at Banovo Hill last night and has been heavily engaged. It is believed we still have at least one gun in action at Velike Vrachar, but communication with this battery is impossible.

About 4 P.M., in accordance with the wishes of General Jivkovitch, Major Elliott and myself, and the men withdrawn from Belgrade, left Torlak for Rasnik, en route to Tchupria, which place it was decided should be our base till the situation became clearer. We took with us what gear and provisions we had been able to evacuate from the town.

About 9 P.M. the situation again changed for the worse. General Jivkovitch informed the Admiral that the enemy had landed large bodies of troops between Tchukaritza and Belgrade and were advancing steadily there; also that they were now in almost complete occupation of the town. The French guns on Topchider Hill had been destroyed and the French Naval Mission was proceeding to Nish. In fact Belgrade was in the hands of the enemy. He therefore desired that the Admiral (for whose safety he was held personally responsible) should also leave for Tchupria, which he did. Just before the Admiral left, our hospital unit also arrived at Torlak. They had been ordered out by Col. Ryan, the American Chief of the Allied hospitals. They

were given a motor lorry and told to find the best of their way to Tchupria.

Two other reports came in from our people that night. The Petty Officer in charge of the guns, which had been sent to Banovo Hill, reported that the enemy were actually advancing up the hill. He had been ordered by the Serbs to destroy his guns but had managed to find bullocks and withdraw them just in time. The two privates of Marines, who had been on watch over the observation mines at Strugara, reported that their post had been occupied by the enemy but that they had brought the firing keys away with them.

October 9th. We reached Tchupria at 10 A.M. and were allotted quarters in a large Czech sugar factory, which thus becomes our temporary base. The members of the Russian Mission arrived at the same time and were established close by. In the afternoon our own hospital unit and Merewether joined us. The party was completed, except for those absent with the guns and on special duty, by the arrival of the Admiral and Yovitchitch in the evening. They had been delayed owing to their car overturning and had walked the last few miles. During the night the French Mission passed through *en route* for Nish.

October 10th. About 9 A.M. our three men, who had been left on watch at the Save Bridge, marched into Tchupria. They reported that the enemy had occupied their post but that they had fired both torpedoes before leaving. We were much relieved to see them, as it was feared they were captured or dead. The Admiral was highly pleased at the way these men, and the two Marines at Strugara, had carried out their instructions to the letter when acting in difficult circumstances and exposed to great danger.

At noon we got into touch with Hilton Young, who had recently joined the Mission and was attached to the Smederevo mining party. He reported by telephone that they had evacuated Smederevo and were installed 5 miles to the rear of that town. From his report we gathered that, like ourselves, his party had been under very heavy gunfire.

The Admiral and I were very busy with despatches and getting in touch with Salonika and Malta.

October 11th. At 9 A.M. the Admiral and Yovitchitch left in the car for Kraguevatz to confer with the British Military Attaché and learn the true state of affairs. Sir Ralph Paget arrived to discuss the whole question of what was to be done about the British hospitals. He missed the Admiral, and I could only counsel delay until we knew which way the cat would jump.

It is officially reported in the town that the situation is vastly improved. The Serbs claim to have driven the enemy back to the Save and Danube at all points and to have captured several guns, but the Serbs are inclined to be over-optimistic and to exaggerate. It is also reported that Nish is decorated in expectation of the arrival of Allied troops.

October 12th. Lieutenant Bullock, Hilton Young and party from Smederevo arrived at 1.30 A.M. They reported that a terrific bombardment of Smederevo commenced A.M. Thursday 7th (a day later than at Belgrade); that the enemy crossed the Danube about 15 kms. below the town on Thursday night, but were repulsed; that the bombardment continued all day Friday, and Friday night, and that the enemy crossed again on Saturday at dawn. Our party, having been shelled out of their old quarters, spent Thursday and Friday under a culvert outside the town and were then ordered back. They had

marched to Palanka, whence they took train to Tchupria. Before leaving Smederevo both torpedoes in the floating tubes were fired, and all explosives and mines removed to the fortress and put under cover there. The Serbian officer in command had promised to destroy them if it became necessary. Our party had lost all their private effects and stores.

At 5 A.M. the Marine Sergeant of the Velike Vrachar battery arrived. He reported that both their guns had been put completely out of action by direct hits after they had seriously damaged one monitor and hit another. They had received the concentrated fire of 24 enemy guns and had remained in action till the guns were destroyed. Their casualties were 2 killed and 14 wounded. On their reporting at Torlak, Kerr had divided the survivors among the other three batteries and sent the N.C.O. down to report to us. Kerr sent satisfactory reports of two of the other batteries, which were still in action, but had been unable to locate the third.

During the day it was decided that our hospital unit should go to Uskub, where they would be put under the direction of Sir Ralph Paget, and they left at 6 P.M.

Hilton Young had a bad attack of appendicitis during the night and I had to give up the whole of my bedding in an effort to make him more comfortable. In actual fact the first I knew of this was when I was awakened by having my mattress and blanket dragged forcibly from beneath me by the doctor and Marine Officer, and I was left to shiver till the dawn.

October 13th. We sent the Marine Sergeant off at 6 A.M. to rejoin Kerr, taking a supply of provisions for No. 3 battery with him.

During the forenoon we got into communication with our Legation at Nish and heard that Bulgaria had apologised for crossing the Serbian frontier—which sounded as though they were not yet ready for war.

The chief of the Military Station at Tchupria called on us but knew little more than we did.

In the afternoon Hilton Young's condition had improved a little, so we sent him off to Nish with Merewether. From there he will go to one of our hospitals.

There are all sorts of rumours of the arrival of French and English Divisions at Salonika but it begins to look as though they are a month too late.

October 14th. We got into touch with General Jivkovitch and learnt that our three batteries are all safe and doing well, but are short of ammunition. I got into touch with the Legation at Nish and asked them to hurry up 1500 rounds which should be at Salonika by now. The trouble is that the only railway through the country is blocked with stores.

October 15th. After negotiation with Army Headquarters we arranged that Kerr should officially join the staff of General Jivkovitch and report daily to the Admiral on the position of affairs. We heard from the same source that the Belgrade army is being steadily pushed back by the enemy and that they have lost all their heavy artillery except our six remaining guns. They were delighted with the good work being done by these.

It is locally reported as official that 240 prisoners and 12 guns have been captured from the Bulgarians at Zaitchar.

At 6 A.M. Merewether returned with six bags of mails —a most welcome sight—and some warm clothing for the men which he had obtained from Sir Ralph Paget. He also brought two new ratings from Malta—a torpedo

artificer and a stoker—but we fear their opportunity to be useful has passed. They will be two more mouths for me to feed.

In the forenoon the men at Tchupria were paraded under arms and inspected by the Admiral. They did not look too bad, all things considered.

The weather here is fine but cold. We hear there has been a lot of rain up north—a great boon to the Serbs as it will retard the German advance.

October 16th. In the forenoon the Admiral presented two decorations which had been given for the picket-boat attacks last spring. Yovitchitch went off with Bullock to Parachin to get warm clothing to replace that lost at Smederevo.

It is now certain there are an English and a French division of troops at Salonika, but it is uncertain to what use they will be put. The general impression is that they will be used to guard the railway and as a striking force against Bulgaria.

October 17th. Two seamen, who had been left at Torlak with the searchlight lorry, arrived. They were no longer required as the lorry has been taken over for ammunition transport.

Kerr arrived at 11 A.M. to report. When he left, the enemy were occupying a line roughly from Ostrujnitza, through Bolech, to the northward of Grotska, and were slowly advancing. He reported all three batteries well. Ostrujnitza had been in action heavily throughout the battle, and Tcholin Grob had narrowly escaped capture by the enemy's infantry. The weather had been very bad.

We sent Merewether and Bullock to Nish to hunt for blankets and warm clothing.

October 18th. The Admiral gave Elliott orders to have

the men's arms immediately handy in case of emergency, and to select defensive positions in case of an enemy cavalry raid down the Morava valley to Tchupria—with the object of destroying the bridge and cutting the railway.

Vrania, which had been occupied by a Bulgarian battalion, has been retaken by the Serbs. While there the Bulgars blew up the bridge, thus blocking the railway between us and Uskub. It appears that our hospital unit got through on the last train.

We hear that Colonel Malcolm, from the British Division now at Salonika, is at Kraguevatz conferring with Headquarters. In the evening we released Captain Yovitchitch to join him. He will be a great loss. Yovitchitch is a fine organiser, which is uncommon in this country.

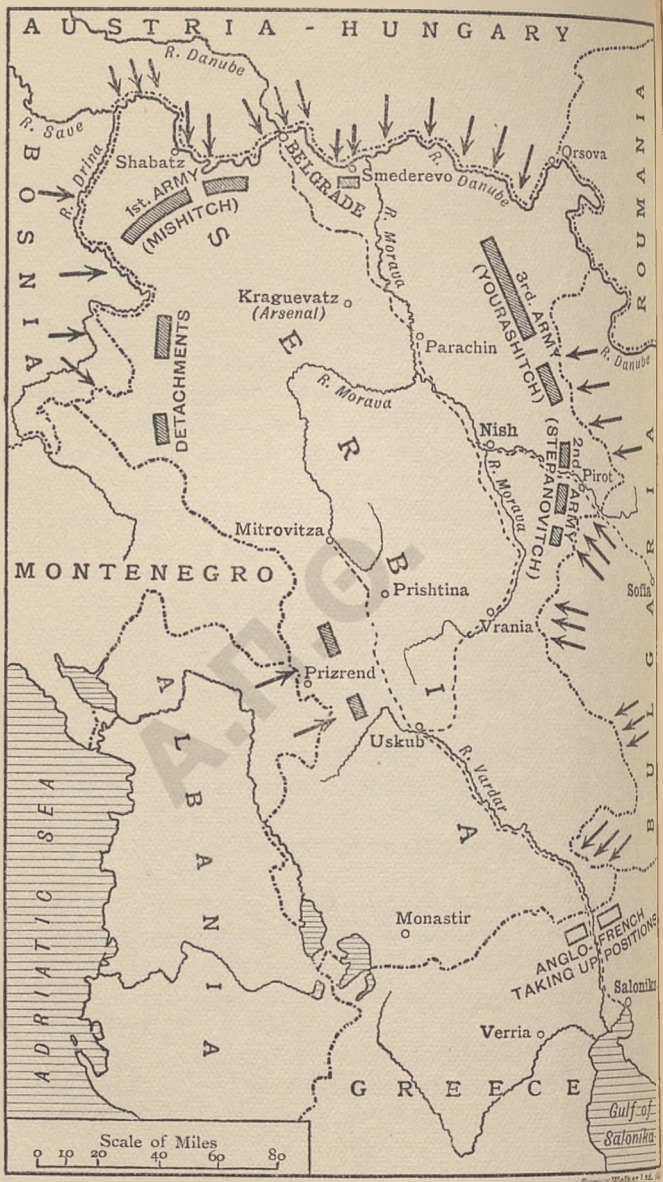
October 19th. We detached a Warrant Officer and two men, with 1500 lbs. of guncotton, to accompany the Russians to Orsova where they are to attempt to blow up the Iron Gates and thus block the passage down the Danube.

About 7 A.M. Merewether and Bullock arrived from Nish with quantities of blankets and warm clothing, obtained from the excellent Sir Ralph Paget. All the Legations, with the exception of our own, have left Nish for Kralyevo.

All the banks have left and Sir Ralph has sent his Red Cross people to Vernatchka Banya. Nish is getting into a panic. I left the whole of my blue naval uniform in Nish and I fear it is gone. How some Bulgar will gloat over it!

In the forenoon two trucks of stores arrived for us from Malta—coal, petrol, 3-pdr. guns and 1500 rounds of ammunition. These things are rather an embarrassment

А.П.Ф.



THE ENEMY CONCENTRATION AGAINST SERBIA

to us in our present position. We sent the ordnance stores to the Arsenal.

In the afternoon we sent mails, blankets, warm clothing and soup tablets to the batteries; also spare strikers for the guns.

We sent Merewether to Nish to get medical stores and tents in case our position here becomes untenable. *October 20th–21st.* Nothing of note except that we got our despatches away.

We sold 10 tons of coal to civilians for 300 francs; it had reached us for the poor old picket-boat. Also sent money, clothes, and provisions to the batteries.

October 22nd. The Military Attaché says things look well on the northern front, but the real menace is Bulgaria. He reports the latter in possession of Veles and Vrania and all communication cut with Salonika.

The enemy concentration against Serbia is pretty comprehensive, as one would imagine with Von Mackensen directing affairs. There appear to be several converging lines of attack. Smallish detachments are operating against the Serbs along the Albanian border, and a larger force is attacking the line of the Drina from the Bosnian bases; Kövess and Gallvitz, with separate armies, are attacking along the Save and Danube fronts; on the east and south-east the two main Bulgarian armies are operating.

The length of frontier to be defended by the Serbs is enormous, and Headquarters estimate the Bulgar and Austro-German effectives to be at least twice our own. They consider it is now too late to attack, and are concentrating on holding up the enemy till the Allies can intervene from Salonika. Of the three Serbian armies the First is to the north-west, the Third to the north-east, and the Second is concentrating for the defence

of Nish. As far as we can understand, the Belgrade sector was held by less than two divisions when we were first attacked.

If Sarrail does not soon move up from the south God knows what will happen!

October 23rd. Merewether returned from Nish with three large tents, medicines, and miscellaneous gear. He is a good scrounger. He reported the evacuation of Nish still proceeding and some panic there. He also brought the good news that our hospital unit had got out of Uskub in time and were now, as far as known, in Salonika. That relieves my mind on one score. Uskub was occupied by the Bulgars this morning.

Elliott and Bullock are looking into the question of mounting our 3-pdr. guns on travelling carriages for service in the field.

Food prices rising enormously and question of finance getting critical.

October 24th (*Sunday*). The Admiral inspected the men at Divisions and read prayers.

Every day now we can hear the sound of heavy cannonading down the Morava Valley and it seems to be getting nearer.

The courier returned with our last consignment to the batteries—unable to get through. The enemy are cutting the line to the north of us as well.

Kerr telephoned in the evening to say batteries in urgent need of stores, so we sent the courier off again by a different route.

Later the Military Attaché telephoned from Tchupria railway station saying he was en route to Krushevatz with the whole of the Headquarters' staff, and advising the Admiral to proceed there with his men without delay. The Admiral refused to leave without orders, which, he

was promised, should be sent to him. We sent a party off to the Arsenal at Kraguevatz with instructions to throw all our guncotton into the river and to arrange to bury our 3-pdr. guns, ammunition and other stores there.

Things are looking very grim.

October 25th and 26th. Owing to the rapid advance of the enemy the Admiral decided to proceed to Krushevatz without awaiting the orders, which have not reached us.

We first sent another party to the Arsenal to clear up our stores. Then at 11 A.M. we sent off an advance party by motor lorry with tents and gear. The rest of us left at 8 P.M. after loading the remainder of our gear and stores into any empty trucks we could find. We got as far as Paradin that evening, but then had a twelve hours' wait owing to the line being blocked. It looked as though we had delayed too long when suddenly the block cleared and we reached Krushevatz at 3 P.M. on 26th. We found one of the large tents rigged, got up our personal gear, and arranged for the remainder of the stores to be placed in a narrow gauge truck suitable for the new railway line.

The Warrant Officer and men sent to help the Russians to blow up the Iron Gates returned, having been chased off by the enemy. The Russians were expected to intern themselves in Roumania. Kerr and the batteries reported five miles north of Kraguevatz.

It is officially reported that the general situation is better. 80,000 Frenchmen are said to be operating along the railway towards Uskub and 30,000 British to be entrenched before Strumnitza. Strong French reinforcements are on the way to Serbia and the local Headquarters expect them to place 250,000 troops in action in the country. [These hopes were sadly disappointed.]

A weak Austrian force is reported to have crossed the western frontier.

October 27th. Heavy rain all night and day. The Admiral gave Elliott written orders to proceed to Monastir by the best available route and await further instructions. I am to accompany this party. I turned over a portion of my precious money to the Admiral to cover expenses of himself and the guns' crews, should they rejoin him. He said he would not settle his Belgrade Mess bill as I might never need the money. I already have I.O.U.'s from the rest of the party, and it seems likely my estate will be a poor one if I do not get through—or they don't.

Serbs reported to have defeated the Bulgars at Vrania. We hear of a lot of victories but still we retreat.

October 28th. Having left a tent, two wagons and some provisions for Kerr and the guns' crews, should they arrive at Krushevatz, in charge of the Military Authorities, we placed the rest of our gear and stores on the train and, after many delays, reached Kralyevo after dark. Raining hard all day. Slept alongside the train.

October 29th. Purchased some bread and meat locally and officers and men were able to breakfast by 11 A.M.

We were then told that it is quite impossible to obtain any transport from here and we were likely to be stranded. However, Elliott invoked the help of our Minister and they went together to the Ministry of War. They were successful, after much difficulty, in obtaining eight bullock wagons and these were sent at once to our camp so as to be under our own eyes and guard.

Two French aeroplanes arrived in the afternoon, one of the pilots being an old friend of mine. We fed them as well as we could.

October 30th. Hands called at 5.30 A.M. It had been

raining heavily all night and was still doing so. We got all our gear out of the trucks and loaded up the eight bullock wagons. Owing to lack of transport we had to leave behind a lot of Mess gear, uniforms, petrol and flour, which we turned over to the Red Cross after kitting-up everybody to capacity.

We finally got away from the camp about 9 A.M., but were delayed fully two hours outside the Military Station while we procured food for the wagon drivers and fodder for the bullocks. By 11 A.M. we were on the march. It rained all day. We lunched by the wayside from food purchased before leaving, and about 5 P.M. reached Lapatnitza, the bullock wagons getting in about one hour later. Everyone was very wet but we were lucky to get lodging, food and warmth in an Inn.

We have made good about 20 kms., after a bad start.

October 31st. Called at 6 A.M. and got away at 7.30.

Proceeding all day along a mountain path following the course of the River Iber—the scenery being lovely, with high hills on either side. Fine weather during forenoon, but rain later.

It has been arranged that Mr. Long (Torpedo Gunner) and I shall lead the advance party, Bullock acting as whipper-in. There are a lot of refugees on the road.

The advance party arrived Usjche about 5.30, the rest after dark. We again found some lodging—this time an empty school—which is a great help as it saves pitching the tent in the wet and gives the men a chance to dry their clothes. Several of the men have trouble with their boots and sore feet in consequence. One bullock wagon broke down but we purloined another in its place. We have today covered 30 kms.; pretty good going.

November 1st. Called at 7 A.M. and got away about 8. The first 10 kms. was a steep climb and many of the bullocks have bad hooves. Progress very slow.

One bullock failed about an hour after the start and the wagon had to be abandoned.

We of the advance party waited over an hour at the first stopping place but, as the bullock wagons were not then in sight, we pushed straight on for Rashka—22 kms. away—without lunch. We did it in 4½ hours, but the sole came right away from one of my boots and I had continually to lash it up with string during the last part of the trek.

There was no accommodation at Rashka so we pitched our tent near the church—in the churchyard in fact—and bought some sheep and cooked them. The bullock wagons with our bedding did not arrive till after midnight. We have done 32 kms. today. Weather improved.

November 2nd. No move today, thus giving an opportunity of resting the bullocks, repairing wagons generally, restowing gear, and obtaining fresh food. I tried to find a cobbler, but none about; I did, however, find a Serb who repaired my boot with wooden pegs—a great idea.

Three men have very bad feet and two of them cannot walk at all. Another is marching in sea boots and lasting out wonderfully.

Eight French aeroplanes arrived and four of us got a meal with them. Another arrival—a queer one—was a woman who had a miscarriage at Tchupria just before we left. These Serbs are a hardy race.

It rained during the night and thoroughly soaked the tent.

November 3rd. Rain ceased at 3 A.M. We were called at 4 and got away about 5.

Our arrangement is that the bullock wagons start away as early as possible, a party staying behind to strike tent, stow it and the bedding in our one motor lorry, and follow on. What happens if the lorry breaks down we don't know. The bullocks only go at about half the pace of men on the march and they are constantly stopped by breakdowns.

The advance party had marched 32 kms. by 1 P.M. and the motor lorry reached us at 3.30. We at once pitched the tent, cleared the lorry, and sent it back to lighten the wagons. Then we started a fire and cooked some food. The bullock cart party arrived about 7 P.M.

The weather has been fine all day and the road not too bad. We made a good supper of a sheep purchased locally, some potatoes and onions.

November 4th. Commenced raining heavily about 3 A.M. The bullock wagons got away at 5.30 while still dark. We struck tent at 6.30 and placed it on the lorry, but the latter got bogged before it reached the road and we had to find bullocks to pull it out.

Owing to the rain many small streams crossing the road had become raging torrents and several of us were immersed trying to cross. At one of these an old Serb offered to carry me over on his back for one dinar. We struck a rock in the middle, however, and foundered. I was swept down quite a long way before I could clutch a rock and pull myself out. Then I had to go in again for the old man. He would not take the dinar and was furious because he had lost his stick, so I gave him mine. Mr. Long was so appalled at our exhibition that he crawled across under water. The wagons were badly delayed by these torrents and the lorry stuck altogether.

We wet ones pushed on hard for Mitrovitza without

lunch. I was disgusted to find that the malted milk tablets in my pockets, which I had treated as my "iron ration", had turned to a sticky fluid.

By 5 P.M. about fourteen men had arrived but the wagons did not get in till after midnight. It was rather a triumph getting them through at all in view of the terrible state of the roads.

All the Diplomatic people are already here.

November 5th–8th. We were resting at Mitrovitza in the hope that the situation would clear somewhat and that we might then be in a better position to judge whether to proceed by Tetovo or Prizrend. It was no good blundering ahead right into the arms of the Bulgarians.

The first night we were without bedding, but the motor lorry turned up on the following afternoon and we were relatively well equipped again. I took over a Kafana for the men and arranged to buy food locally and have it cooked there. Live stock was getting scarce and prices soaring. It was now just a calendar month since we had left Belgrade. We found a Turkish bath in working order and everyone had a very badly needed scrub and change of underlinen.

Sir Ralph Paget has asked us to take with us a lady doctor and three nurses (from Montenegro) and we have, rather reluctantly, agreed to do so. About three hundred British nurses have already been left behind at Kralyevo and we feel that this party would be better with them.

We were busy reducing our gear to a minimum, each member of the party being allowed what he could pack into one third of a kit bag. We shall take the rest as far as possible and then dump it. I went through the archive case and destroyed all unnecessary papers; the question of accounts was what worried me most.

We have detected a big change in the Serbian attitude towards us. A short time ago we were very popular, but there is now a definite coolness. They are raising the cry that the Allies have betrayed them and, in our opinion, they have good cause for doing so.

November 9th. Hands called at 3.30 A.M. and we started getting gear to the station at 4 in readiness to leave at 6. About 5 A.M. we were informed that this train was cancelled. We finally got away at 2 P.M., were held up for two hours outside the town; reached Prishtina at 6 and Ferizovitch at 10. We had come 60 kms., under trying circumstances, which means at least two days marching saved. Officers and women slept in a carriage and the men in their trucks.

November 10th. My birthday. Called about 5.30 A.M. and cleared our gear from the train.

On arrival last night we asked the Military authorities for 8 bullock wagons; it was a pleasant surprise when 10 arrived.

Loaded up and got away about 10 A.M. in beautiful weather, but slow going as bullocks very small and wagons heavily loaded. We passed through the village of Stiglia about 4 and pitched tent shortly afterwards. It started raining very heavily just before we camped, making things very cold and comfortless. We Officers gave up our bedding to the nurses.

We have only made about 15 kms. today.

November 11th. Called at 5 A.M. and got away about 6. Fine weather during the forenoon but rained heavily later. During the early part of the day we were marching up hill, but in the afternoon got down on to the plain. Very slow going owing to the awful mud. None of these roads is metalled. Long and I still leading and I feel tremendously fit.

We only made 10 kms. by midday, but got along faster in the afternoon and reached the village of Suharicka about 4 P.M. There we got a room in a school for officers and nurses and two other small rooms for the men. Managed to buy some food.

I had a good example of the Serbian peasant's wonderful hospitality today. Accompanied by the interpreter I had walked into a hovel near a ford asking our way. When he heard that I was an English officer the ancient ford keeper insisted on giving me an apple and a spoonful of honey. I replied by slipping a five-dinar note into a child's pocket, unseen. When we got outside the interpreter told me they were starving and that the apple was literally the last food they had in the house; he also said I should not have insulted them by leaving the money.

The weather cleared up at night, but this morning we had snow on the surrounding hills and we shiver at the thought of Albania.

November 12th. A fine day with brilliant sunshine. More snow on the hills and very much colder. Got away about 7 A.M. and made excellent going, having far less breakdowns than usual. After 19 kms. we reached Prizrend—a large and important town on the Serbian side of the Albanian frontier.

We found excellent sleeping quarters for officers and nurses in a former Turkish harem. The British Vice-Consul from Nish joined our party and will be a great asset as he speaks the language and knows the country well.

November 13th–16th. Resting at Prizrend and waiting for news of the southern exits. We found a food famine in the town owing to the huge number of refugees, what bread there was being very black and sour. That

ON THE MARCH: THE SERBIAN RETREAT

THE LORRY IN DIFFICULTIES

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meant ceasing to live off the country and drawing on our own modest supply of dry provisions.

An incident happened here which had a sequel twenty years later. Walking down the street I met a bullock-wagon entering the town driven by a rather grubby but obvious Englishwoman. I stopped her and asked who she was. She said she was an English nurse and had got a Serbian officer in the cart who had been shot through both legs. I asked her how long she had had him and she replied two days. I said, "This scandal has gone on long enough; take your officer to the Serbian hospital and then join our unit." In 1935 that nurse met me in Manchester and reminded me of the incident, which I had forgotten. She said that for twenty years she had been trying to invent a good retort.

On the 15th we learned that the route via Tetovo was unsafe as the Bulgars would occupy it at any moment. This meant we had no alternative but to go by Dibra, a far more serious proposition. I had some bad moments about the food situation. To make matters worse there was no transport to be had, but the Serbian Minister of War promised to do his best for us. He also told us that the Austro-Germans were close on our heels.

November 17th. Called at 4 A.M. and got away about 6, some bullock wagons having been supplied. I left about half my kit with a dear old Turk who swore that it would be quite safe with him. "If you return in 1 year it will still be here. In 5, 10, 20 or 50 years it will still be here if I or mine are still alive."

The address was 81 Karageorge Street, and if he or his should read this book I would like them to know that

there were many private treasures among my kit and I shall hope some day to call and recover it.

Luckily the ladies were to get a lift in hospital cars as we had the worst day's experience up to date. It commenced raining about 8 A.M. and continued without cessation till 1; then it became bitterly cold and snowed.

We arrived at Lyumcula just before dark in a state of much misery—very wet and cold. There was no accommodation whatever there and only one spot for the tent—right on top of a hill. When the bullock wagons did arrive we had great difficulty in getting them up to the camp site. In an effort to dry our clothes and get warm we lit large fires with wet wood *inside* the tent and the smoke was absolutely stifling. At night it froze hard.

We made good 30 kms. today and crossed the Albanian border at 4 P.M.

November 18th. Not called till 7.30 so as to give us a rest after yesterday. Luckily the weather was warm and sunny so that our clothes dried while marching. By the afternoon we had only made good 12 kms. and reached the village of Bitsan.

The road was the worst we have yet encountered—just a river of mud. The bullock wagons were frequently bogged, and cannot go much further; the beasts are small ones and are played out. The women rejoined us. There was a little snow and a cold wind.

November 19th. The military authorities informed us that no transport whatever could go beyond here, there being none available for us if it could. That meant we were left with four ponies which were our own property. I managed to purchase two pack saddles. On these we decided to take four days' provisions and the

small box of important archives. The tent, spare ammunition and all other gear must go, with the exception of what each man could carry on his person in addition to his rifle and ammunition. We filled our pockets with soup tablets and our water bottles with brandy. The rest of the food and clothing was given to the starving rabble who flooded the road.

We finally got away about noon but almost immediately had trouble with the pack saddles. We were not sufficiently expert to know what they would carry and how to load them. At intervals they slipped under the ponies' bellies and we had to start over again. In addition the track became very difficult. It was just a mountain path between two snow-covered ranges, often on the edge of a precipice, and almost blocked altogether by the vast number of refugees and Austrian prisoners passing along it.

I had certain treasures which I was very loath to lose, so I made them up into a large bundle and slung it on a pole. My Czech servant Ottokar and I each took an end, but the swaying to and fro on the difficult track was more than could be borne. After two or three kilometres in increasing misery I realised it was a hopeless scheme and threw the whole lot over a precipice into a raging river far below. With them went an excellent pair of field glasses, loaned to me under the Lord Roberts scheme; I later explained to their lady owner how and why they perished.

The Austrian prisoners were in a terrible state. There were 80,000 of them when the retreat started and they were driven down through the mountains like sheep, with no possible arrangements for food, clothing or shelter. [About 5000 lived to tell the tale.]

By nightfall we had covered 12 kms. and reached

Loosan Camp. As dusk fell the Albanians, who hate the Serbs, started sniping the road and caused many casualties. They usually fired from the opposite side of a gorge. We found that cries of "Ingleski" had a wonderful effect in making us immune from these attacks. The English have a great name in Albania, and even the one or two Scotsmen in our party sank their nationalism for once. The word "Britanski" would not have saved their skins.

For the night we found a hayloft for the ladies, but officers and men slept in the open. Under such wild conditions it was necessary to give the women a guard, so we officers arranged to take it in turns to lie inside the door of the loft. I slept with a clothes-prop jammed under the latch and with the other end in my ribs. About 1 A.M. the prop jolted me and I nearly shot a man who was trying to get in; he turned out to be the proprietor. Another who had a narrow escape was a refugee who crawled out of the hay.

November 20th. A cold rain commenced about 1 A.M. and we had our clothes and blankets soaked. We made a miserable start about 7.

All day we climbed at a very steep angle, the track being so muddy and slippery that the pack horses frequently fell. It was a great labour getting them up again. We reached Vasiat, at the summit of the range, in the afternoon and the Vice-Consul did some excellent work with the Albanian mayor, as a result of which we got cover for officers, nurses and men. We were now very high up and it was freezing hard outside. Our first care was to dry our clothing and blankets and deal with our feet; few of us had the proper boots for this sort of thing and sailors are notoriously bad marchers. They spend too much time scrubbing decks in bare feet.

I had a very pathetic meeting today. Behind a rock at the side of the track I found a dying Austrian officer in uniform. He told me he was a doctor, that he was dying of typhus and that there was no hope. I told him I was English and gave him a piece of black bread; he was starving. He then told me that he had originally had a great love and reverence for England, but he had lost it a year ago. He had been medical officer of the Austrian cruiser *Aspern*, when they were surprised by the French and British off Antivari and sunk with all hands. He said no effort was made to pick any of them up and very few had survived. I was able to tell him that I also had been there, that the British Admiral had asked permission to pick up survivors, and that the French C.-in-C. had refused. He said he was very glad to know that before he died; one of his great faiths had been restored. The meeting was the most extraordinary coincidence of my career.

We made a modest meal off our service provisions and are getting very hungry.

November 21st—Sunday. Hands called at 4.30 A.M. and got away about 6. There was a thick mist when we started and it was freezing hard. There was, of course, no privacy and we were very close to nature. A ridiculous situation occurred when the mist lifted for a few minutes and disclosed the fact that the elderly lady doctor and I had both chosen the same wall behind which to conduct our private affairs. The circumstance was tactfully ignored.

The path was precipitous and covered with ice, but was now all down hill. We had crossed the "divide". In the late afternoon we had mud to our knees.

Small rations of bully beef and biscuit were issued to the men.

The mass of refugees is thinning out and we fear the great majority have died. I saw a donkey fall, and it was immediately skinned and the raw flesh hacked from the bones. Nothing could be wasted and there were no facilities for cooking.

That night we reached the village of Rentz.

November 22nd. Hands fell in at 4 A.M. on a beautifully fine day. At first we had good going as the track was frozen hard, but as the sun rose it became very treacherous and slippery.

We arrived at Pishko Pair at 10 A.M., after four hours' steady march. We rested men and horses there and issued a ration of biscuit and fruit. Then we pushed ahead again.

We knew we were getting near the end of the trail, but did not know whether we would find friends or enemies there. However, there was no turning back; the die was cast. That afternoon, tremendously hungry and talking of nothing but menus at London hotels, Mr. Long and I agreed to share a tin of condensed milk which I had carried for a week. We found a quiet spot and split the tin with a sharp piece of flint. The milk was sour and green with mould. We were already suffering from violent diarrhoea and dare not touch it. There were tears in our eyes when we left.

The distance from Rentz to Dibra is 32 kms. and we found it almost too much for the women, and others with bad feet. The lady doctor begged us to leave her to her fate. However, two of us—the tallest—supported her on either side and strong nips of neat brandy worked wonders. [She spent six weeks in bed after reaching Salonika.] Darkness fell at 5.30 and we got in at 8 P.M. The nurses are done, and must have at least one day's rest. We broke open an empty Kafana and took possession for the men.

I was shaved by an Austrian prisoner and only afterwards thought of the risk.

November 23rd. Just before arriving at Dibra we had re-crossed the Albanian frontier and we felt that, provided we did not run into the Bulgars, the most critical part of our journey was now over. We spent the day cleaning ourselves and effecting some very necessary repairs to our clothes. A Serbian regiment kindly made us honorary members of their Mess and in the evening we officers had a big feed of haricot bean soup. I managed to purchase some other provisions locally for our men.

The First British Field Hospital, with 17 nurses, also arrived last night and we found 2 motor cars and a lorry awaiting us. They had been sent over by the British Consul at Monastir. It was decided that these should be used to evacuate the women.

November 24th. The Serbs most reluctantly gave us some transport and at about 7 A.M. 12 two-wheeled bullock carts arrived outside our quarters. We placed on them the remainder of our food—which was very little—our blankets, and the equipment of the men. This was a tremendous physical relief to all.

In my half-starved condition I must have eaten too many haricot beans for, during the night, I had terrific pains and my stomach blew up to twice its normal size. At 6 A.M. it looked as though I must be left behind. However, Major Elliott and I both signed an authorisation to the doctor and he gave me a large injection of morphia. As a result I marched in a comatose condition till noon, when we had covered 13 kms., and after that I gradually returned to normal. I was told that I was most amenable to discipline after the injection and obeyed all instructions without question.

We arrived at Lyukovo about 5 P.M., just saving daylight, and found a roof to cover us.

November 25th. Weather fine and warmer and road much improved. We reached Struga, on the shore of Lake Ochrida, at 4 P.M. after marching 24 kms. and found five British Army lorries awaiting us—a glorious sight. We had just made all arrangements to leave early tomorrow when we received urgent orders from the Serbs to leave at once. The Bulgars were advancing.

We left Struga at 8 P.M. in a heavy snowstorm and drove all night. The road was bad, and obliterated by snow in places, so that progress was slow. We huddled close together and sang chorus songs to keep up our spirits. We reached Monastir at 4 A.M., more than half frozen.

November 26th. Mine was the first lorry in and we found quarters with the British M.T. unit. We feared the others had been snowed up. However, a second lorry arrived at midday with eight men and our blankets—a great joy. By nightfall there was no news of the three missing lorries and we became seriously alarmed as to their fate.

I spent the afternoon with the British Consul arranging for passports and accommodation in connection with our further journey to Salonika. In the street I met a Serb who had been left behind at our hospital in Belgrade, supposedly shot through the spine and paralysed from the hips downwards. It looked like a miracle. He said a near-by explosion had "made him jump" in bed and had "done something to his back". He found he could walk and in the confusion had escaped from Belgrade and walked two or three hundred miles to Monastir. I never knew such a hardy race.

November 27th. About 5.30 A.M. a Serbian officer woke

OFFICERS AND NURSES SNATCHING A MEAL BY THE WAYSIDE

COLD COMFORT AT MONASTIR

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me up and said Monastir was being evacuated and the last train would leave at 8. Elliott decided to send everyone on except himself; he would go out with the Consul to try and trace our missing men.

As we passed down the railway we saw heavy firing going on a few miles to the Eastward and several shells were fired at the train. The whole country is under a foot of snow.

The Greeks made no trouble on the frontier and we reached Salonika at 2 A.M. on Sunday 28th November—seven and a half weeks after being blown out of Belgrade.

We were taken on board H.M.S. *Exmouth* at 4 A.M. and had a huge meal in the Wardroom. After about an hour the Fleet Surgeon looked in and heard our tale. When he saw we were eating beef and pickles, after starving for a month, he flew into a great rage, had everything removed, and sent us all to bed. If we were not "all dead from stomach trouble by midday" then we ought to be! The men were taken to the stokers' bathroom, and their clothing was burned.

Elliott and the missing men arrived.

Our Serbian Adventure was at an end.

Before closing this chapter I feel my readers would like to know what happened to the Admiral, Kerr and the guns.

The Velike Vrachar battery was destroyed during the attack upon Belgrade. The other three batteries had all been heavily engaged during the battle of 5th–8th October and then commenced a gradual retirement before the advancing enemy, being frequently in action against their artillery and infantry and rendering good service in checking their advance. On 22nd

October they were concentrated at Mladenovatz, thirty miles south-east of Belgrade, and from there moved south to Topola, and thence by forced marches to Krushevatz. At this period of the retreat they were constantly taking up positions for action, but as constantly obliged to abandon their intentions and to continue the retreat with the Serbian infantry, the hurried retirement of which of necessity governed the employment of the artillery. Early in November the guns were transferred to the Army which was defending Nish and were disposed in positions west of the Morava to cover the crossing of that river by the retreating Serbians. On 12th November a sudden retreat was ordered and great difficulty was experienced in getting the guns away. No. 3 battery, which was in position ten miles from any road, while crossing a swamp on the hillside, had the guns sunk above the axles, from which position the combined efforts of men and oxen failed to move them. The transport and ammunition were saved but the guns were stripped and abandoned.

There were now but four guns remaining and the retreat was fast becoming a rout. Ours were the only heavy guns with the Army and there was nothing between them and the enemy.

From Novi Bazar–Kralyevo–Krushvatz stretched the Austro-German line; across the Morava their left joined hands with the Bulgarian right at Nish. The railway was occupied by Bulgarian troops. From 12th to 17th November was one incessant forced march to escape from the pincers, and then Prishtina was reached.

On 22nd November the retreat of the armies to Ipek in Montenegro was ordered and our four guns left Prishtina with the Third Army. The roads were nearly impassable and No. 2 battery became inextricably sunk in a frozen swamp. The guns were stripped and left.

Only two guns now remained. On 26th November one fell through a small bridge into a river and was lost. On 29th November the nine Englishmen with the one remaining gun awoke to find that the Serbian soldiers had left them. Human endurance could do no more. They stripped the gun and buried it, and marched on.

By 1st December Kerr and all the guns' crews had arrived at Ipek, where it had been previously determined, in any case, to destroy the heavy artillery. From there they marched through the mountains into Albania by way of Andreavitza: the rearguard of the Serbian Army, which was incessantly harassed by Albanians, was immediately in rear of them. After a very arduous march of eleven days they arrived at Podgoritza, near the lake of Skutari, which they crossed in boats. They joined the Admiral, who had journeyed there with the Serbian headquarters staff, at Skutari on 15th December. They had suffered much from want and privation, having been many days without bread or any proper food, and many were without boots; their personal effects and tents had long since been lost and all were completely worn out. Since leaving Belgrade on 8th October they had been sixty-seven days fighting and retreating. Of the 103 British

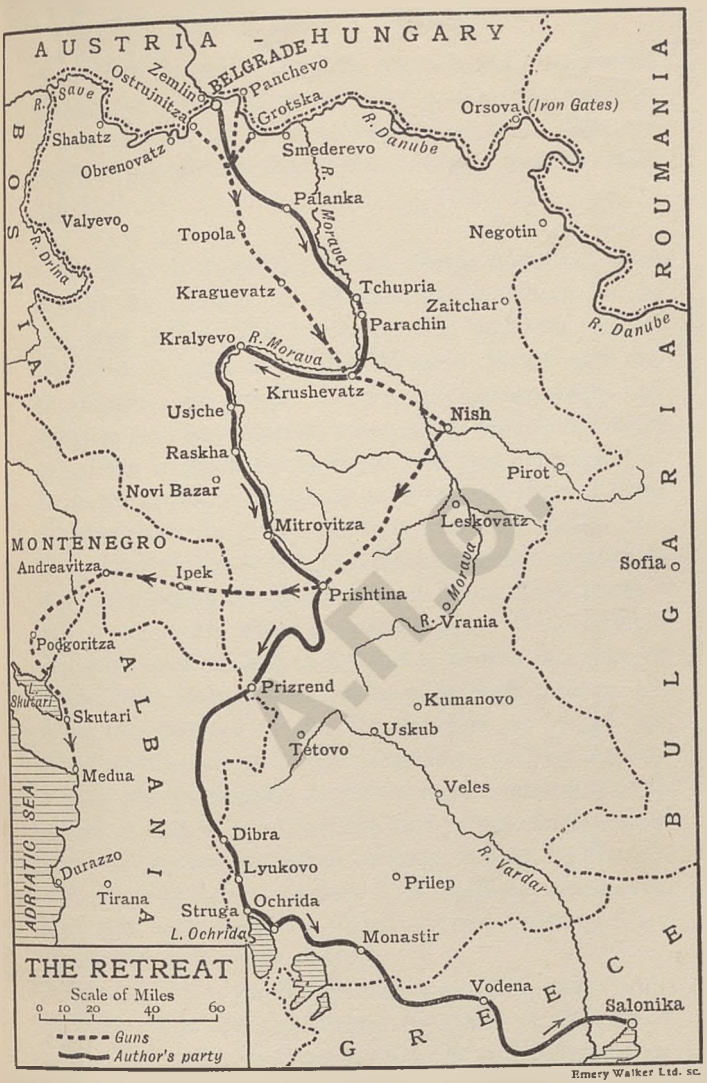
and Serbians who had composed the guns' crews on 11th October, 53 were killed or wounded in action by 1st December.

After giving the men two days' rest at Skutari, and sending the worst cases to hospital, the Admiral marched with them to San Giovanni di Medua. There I was to meet them again.

At a banquet given in the Admiral's honour by the Vali of Skutari, the Albanian said: "Since you crossed the borders of my country a thousand eyes have watched you waking and a thousand eyes have watched you sleeping; not a hair of your head could have been touched without my immediate knowledge".

It only remains to add that the Crown Prince Alexander, Generalissimo of the Serbian Armies, sent for Admiral Troubridge and informed him that he had received reports from the general officers under whom our people had served. He wished to say that these officers all praised very highly the general conduct and bearing in action of the British sailors. General Jivkovitch, under whose command the mission had been for ten months, reported to him that, both at Belgrade and during the retreat, they had shown an example of courage and devotion to duty to all the Army. He wished to express his sense of the great services rendered by Great Britain to Serbia, which services they would never forget.

A subsequent message from the Admiralty, traditionally concise, was expressed in the following words: "I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to convey to you their approbation of the



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conduct of yourself and all the members of the Mission throughout a time of severe and prolonged strain. It is a satisfaction to Their Lordships to know that the credit of the British Naval Service has been worthily upheld."

We English members of the Naval Missions were heartily disgusted at the blatant way in which Serbia had been left in the lurch by her powerful Allies. Obsessed in turn with the Western Front and the Dardanelles, the British and French governments had failed to give any support when a few divisions would have been of incalculable value, and had even gone so far in the opposite direction as to restrain Serbia from removing the Bulgarian menace from her flank. And then, when the blow fell, and disaster and irremediable ruin were raging along the Balkan Front, they acted—and acted with absurd inadequacy. Two pitiable divisions were landed at Salonika; at that late date it would have been better to have landed none at all. After the disaster at the Dardanelles we could not afford another check in the Near East, and by landing a tardy and inadequate force we were courting a fresh rebuff. A new and vulnerable line of sea communications was opened up when tonnage was at a premium and shipping hard to spare. The Serbians considered they had been betrayed; Lord Carson resigned from the British Cabinet in disgust.

In such crises public opinion may often exert more pressure than the considered opinions of the Army staffs. The ordinary man in France and Britain con-

sidered that the Serbs had been badly let down; there were many prominent statesmen of a like mind. Civilian opinion was responsible for the gesture of a Salonika landing in October and national prestige was responsible for the subsequent reinforcement which made it almost impossible to withdraw. It might almost be said that an accident led to the final victory. . . . But I must not anticipate.

A.П.Ф.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AFFAIR OF THE s.s. *BRINDISI*

We had arrived on board *Exmouth* at 4 A.M.; we left for Lemnos the same afternoon.

We had existed—I use the word deliberately—under somewhat harsh and trying conditions for seven weeks and we were in no state to make the journey. I ventured to convey to the Rear-Admiral at Salonika my impression that both officers and men needed, above all else, immediate rest and good food. We were all in an emaciated condition (I had myself lost two stone in weight), most of us were suffering from a form of dysentery or violent diarrhoea, many were rheumatic, and our feet were almost due for the surgeon's hands. I could see no possible reason to hurry on. However, orders are orders, and we sailed in a small boat called the *Abyssieh* at 5 P.M.

After my rebuff by the Rear-Admiral I did one useful deed. I raced ashore to thank the Consul-General for the wonderful help he had given us throughout the year, and at the Consulate I found seven bags of mails. We sorted them on the voyage and it cheered us up a lot.

On arrival at Mudros we went on board *Europa*, where I arranged for the accommodation of officers and men. I then went on board *Lord Nelson*, where I was most kindly received by Admiral Wemyss and had a

long talk with him and his Chief of Staff, Commodore Keyes. They must both have been overworked—preparing for the evacuation of the Dardanelles—but they found time to give an hour or two to me and my Serbian affairs. At lunch the Admiral told me to ask him personally for whatever I wanted. I replied that we needed rest and good food; that I wanted a complete equipment for sixty men; and that I wished for facilities to rejoin my chief as soon as possible. He told his Flag-Lieutenant to hand him a signal pad and then wrote the following generous message to the Captain of the Fleet supply ship:

"Admiral Troubridge's Secretary is to be supplied with whatever he may require.

"ROSSLYN WEMYSS."

When I showed the message to the Captain of the *Minnetonka*, he growled, "What do you want? The whole bloody ship?"

As a result of this interview I collected all the gear I needed, drew some money and paid the men, and returned to Salonika to await events and have a rest.

There we heard bad news of the two Anglo-French Divisions for whose arrival the Serbs had decorated Nish. After landing on 8th October the French 2nd Division had advanced to Krivolak, and the British 10th (Irish) Division to Lake Doiran; they had crossed the Serbo-Greek frontier, but that was all. There was not even unity of command. The French under Sarrail failed to link up with the Serbs defending the Babuna Pass; the Irish under Sir Bryan Mahon lost 1300 men

and 8 guns. Early in December they were back in Greece, and only Greek neutrality saved them from more utter defeat.

On the 9th December the last two men of our party marched in. They had wandered from the snowed-up lorries outside Monastir and had marched slowly south through Greece—one of the men having his feet bound up with straw. That meant that we had got everybody through and all became rapidly sound in wind and limb. We heard that the French Mission had suffered badly from frostbite; they *would* sit down and make tea in the snow. By chasing our men round the camp every hour or so at night, and keeping them moving during the day, we had prevented that. The hard weather which we experienced on the borders of Albania had appeared in the form of a blizzard at the Dardanelles.

I spent some busy days with the archive case trying to restore some order to my cash and store accounts. Supply notes poured in and I could not trace half the stuff. I came to the conclusion that to be a Secretary is a gentleman's existence but to be a Paymaster is a drudgery. The other members of the mission need only eat and grow fat.

Then came news that Admiral Troubridge was at Skutari. A telegram requested that the rest of the party be sent to Malta, but that I should rejoin him in Albania by any possible route. We went back to Mudros, where we found the evacuation proceeding, and from there took passage in the ferry-boat *Wahine*. We reached Malta on Sunday, 19th December 1915. I had been away just ten months; it seemed like ten years.

At Malta I received every possible kindness from the officers of the depot ship and dockyard officials. Troubridge's telegram had asked for his Secretary, equipment, food and gold. We knew that he had Kerr and the guns' crews with him and that gave me some idea of the minimum I should require. Naval Store Officers submerged their natural instincts and gave me whatever I asked. The dockyard cashier even produced two hundred pounds in gold, though gold was out of circulation at the time.

I spent all the private money I could raise on new equipment for myself and charming presents for the Admiral and Kerr.

I still had with me my Czech servant Ottokar but felt I needed one more hand as well. I spoke to Elliott about this and he suggested we should "fall in" the men and call for a volunteer. He explained to them that I was off on a ticklish enterprise and wanted one man only to lend me a hand—volunteers to take one step forward; and the whole rank moved. I chose Petty Officer Grimstead, an excellent man and one whom I knew I could completely trust. After waiting impatiently for several days we took passage in the collier *Kassala* at the end of the month.

I had an interesting and amusing voyage with that collier skipper. He was in a deadly funk of submarines, so we sat up day and night and drank whisky in his cabin while he told me the story of his life. When that subject failed we discussed the peccadilloes of his children, but we always spared his wife. Outside the harbour of Taranto we were kept waiting for eight

solid hours in broad daylight; the Merchant Service can swear harder and longer than the Navy—their vocabulary is more "intense".

From Taranto we took rail to Brindisi, where we were accommodated on board the light cruiser *Weymouth* to await the first opportunity to proceed. At this time there was a squadron of British light cruisers at Brindisi and a squadron of battleships at Taranto—to give the Italians moral support.

We went on board the Italian s.s. *Città di Brindisi* on the afternoon of 6th January. My first care was to see that our stores and equipment were properly stowed in the hold; the two hundred pounds in gold I carried in my tunic pockets. I also had on me six thousand French paper francs, so I felt that financially I was well equipped. The Captain, for his part, told me that he had on board about a million francs in gold and the whole of the food provided by public subscription in Canada for the relief of Montenegro; an American told me later that the value of these provisions was about £600,000.

About an hour after our arrival, a party of 500 Montenegrins, who were returning from the United States and Canada to fight for their native land, came on board. They were in ordinary civilian suits and appeared to have no one in charge. I was asked to take command. It was my first command and I was inordinately proud of it. I took all possible steps to find them food and sleeping quarters and left them fairly comfortable for the night. Escorted by two Italian destroyers, we sailed at 8 P.M. When I went below I

found a small French medical mission bedding down in the saloon. There were two pretty nurses with them and I insisted they should have my cabin, which they were rather reluctant to do. I slept on the table in the saloon.

I awoke bright and early and went on deck to find that mountains were in sight above the mist. The Montenegrins, who had slept upon the upper deck, or in the holds, were excited and cheery, and we expected to be in harbour in an hour's time. I inspected the gun's crew on the fo'c'sle and "fell in" the troops to wash and clean. They were bursting with pride and patriotism and told me exactly how many hundred American dollars and eagles they carried in belts round their waists. All being well, I fetched my camera and stood upon the fo'c'sle to take a photograph of my first command. I never got that photograph. Instead there was a most appalling explosion and the whole of the bows were blown off. The first thing I knew was picking myself up from where I had hit the base of the bridge, and then pieces of gun and gun's crew were dropping round. The ship was behaving like a drunken man and was already sinking by the bows. I shouted to those near me to seize hold of any oars or loose timber lying about, and then tore off my "British warm" and threw away my revolver and ammunition pouch. Assisted by Grimstead I tried to lower a boat, but the Montenegrins jumped into it and jammed the falls. There was such complete panic among the civilian troops that my orders were neither heeded nor obeyed. My first command was a failure! As the bows sank the stern rose and the propeller commenced to thrash. Men jumped overboard

and were sucked into the blades; heads and arms and legs came up and the sea seemed full of blood. I saw men sit on the rail and shoot themselves rather than face a death they feared. I imagine not one in a hundred could swim. The Italian sailors seized the only lifebelts and leaped over the side; when I saw that all was hopeless, I collected Grimstead and Ottokar and followed suit. As I struck the water I kicked out, went right under those awful blades, and came up on the other side.

When we were struck—whether by mine or torpedo I do not know—we were about three miles from the shore, at the mouth of the Black Drin River, the current of which was carrying icy water from the mountains and even sheets of thin ice. I knew, therefore, that it would be difficult to swim ashore. We had sunk in about five minutes and could expect little help from shore boats; I doubted if there were any left. Looking out to sea I saw a foamy wash and remembered the destroyers; surely the Italians would pick us up. I swam hard out to sea, but soon I noticed that the foam was receding into the mist, till it finally disappeared. I heard afterwards that the destroyers had returned to Brindisi and reported we were sunk with all hands.

There I was, alone in a cold grey world. My swim out to sea had carried me away from the appalling struggles which must be going on round the wreck, but, on the other hand, I had seriously increased my distance from the shore. I considered what I would do. I commenced dispassionately to empty the gold sovereigns out of my tunic pockets. They were heavy and I could afford no extra weight. Then I remembered that

the Admiral had said his Secretary *must bring gold* and I ceased to empty it away. I threw away my uniform cap. Then I bethought me that it was my badge of naval rank and I recovered it again; if I was to be picked up I would rather be treated as an Englishman than any other nationality; I remembered the cry of "Ingleski" and its effect on the Albanians. At least, I thought, I could do without my field boots, and I commenced to divest myself of them. I drew my pocket-knife and cut the laces from the knee downwards. The right boot went, but the left one would not budge. In the icy water I gave a violent wrench and a huge ball of cramped muscle developed between my thigh and knee. That, I thought, must be the end. Normally I could swim like a duck but I could make little progress with only one leg at work. I paddled round and round in the mist with not a soul in sight and only distant cries. I became weak and numb and the water made me choke. There seemed no hope and I deliberately tried to drown. I drank and drank, and went into a coma, but awoke to find myself swimming strongly again. Then I did not care and all things seemed a dream.

I awoke to find myself in a boat. I had been picked up unconscious by an Italian hospital ship steaming slowly down the coast. They saw me in the water, stopped engines and lowered a boat. They thought I was dead and threw me on to the floor-boards and pulled ahead. Then they found other corpses and threw them on top of me. Some time after I crawled out and pulled an oar. Then I went off again.

My next memory is of finding myself lying face downwards, naked, on a floor. Someone was scrubbing my back with a hard brush. Then they turned me over and scrubbed my chest. I smelt brandy or rum and some was poured down my throat. I opened my eyes and saw two lovely faces gazing at me. "Am I in heaven?" I asked, and then went off again.

The scene moves to a cabin. I was lying under piles and piles of blankets with hot bottles all around. Two young nurses came in and sat upon my bunk. "Are we really so pretty?" they asked. "We thought you were dead and were scrubbing you with cognac to try to bring you round." "You are lovely," I replied.

An Italian officer looked in and asked me how I was. I said, "Fine". Then he asked whether I had been given brandy, and I said, "No". He gave me a strong tot. A second officer looked in and asked the same question and received the same answer. I had several tots. Then I felt quite well.

I asked for my clothes. They had been sent to the engine-room to be dried. My tunic was found but my breeches and underclothes had gone. The pockets of the tunic were empty; six thousand francs had been stolen, but the doctor who had stripped me produced sixty pounds in gold. They lent me a red blanket which I wore as a kilt, an embroidered nightdress, and a pair of brown American boots with lumpy toes.

They told me both my men were saved. Grimstead was found stark naked on a barrel of lard, blowing a

whistle for all he was worth; it saved him in that fog. Ottokar, who could not swim, had supported himself between two baulks of timber. Of my Montenegrin "troops" one hundred and twenty were saved.

I went to the bridge and rated the Captain. I said his men were thieves. He tore his hair and cursed and said there were submarines about and he must leave without delay. I demanded to be put on shore.

A.П.Ф.

CHAPTER XVII

SAN GIOVANNI DI MEDUA

When I landed at Medua in an Albanian boat the Admiral was on the pier to meet me.

"I'm glad to see you," he said. "I saw your ship go down. What have you done with my mails?"

"I had three months' mails," I replied, "and they are at the bottom of the sea."

"My God, that's terrible!" he said. "I wish you had gone with them—that is, unless you have any gold."

And when I told him of all the presents I had bought for him at Malta, and of all the equipment and stores, he nearly wept.

It was not quite the happy reunion I had planned.

The port of Medua is very small. There were in all about ten small houses, mostly stores, in a tumbledown condition. A road, 50 yards broad and 500 yards long, separates the sea from the rocky hills. I spent two weeks on that bleak and inhospitable shore. We were accommodated in a dilapidated harbour-master's house, with little glass in the windows and no carpets on the floors. It was bitterly cold and we were bombed by Austrian aeroplanes every day.

On the second morning an utterly distraught woman walked into my room. I was but half dressed at the time

and surprised at the unannounced intrusion. She explained that she was one of the French nurses to whom I had given my cabin in the *Brindisi*. She had been in the lavatory when the explosion came. She had raced back to her cabin to find the door blocked, and she said the anguished cries of her friend would be with her to her dying day. She had jumped overboard and been picked up more dead than alive. When I saw her she was half demented and her staccato French difficult to understand. We feared for her reason and evacuated her on the first boat.

The Admiral's job was to evacuate, in Italian ships, as many as possible of the civilian refugees who at that time surrounded the port. It was a thankless task. For every passage granted over one hundred were asked. The refugees were starving, ships were scarce, and sickness all too rife. A large camp of schoolboys were attacked by dysentery and died like flies.

To aid us in our task we had the invaluable assistance of two foreign officers—Colonel Deroc, an officer of real tact and ability, and a great gentleman, in the capacity of Serbian Aide-de-Camp, and Lieutenant Lenyani of the Italian Navy, cheery and indefatigable, lent to us by the Duke of the Abruzzi, Commander-in-Chief at Taranto. Deroc prevented our delicate relations with the Serbs from becoming impossible; Lenyani regulated all that difficult business of the Italian ships—their reception, clearing, and the embarkation of passengers and refugees. Without these two we could have achieved little.

Originally the Serbs had demanded that the Admiral should evacuate the Army as well. That army, which was over 300,000 before the retreat, was now down to 80,000 men. It appeared to the Admiral to be folly to even contemplate the embarkation of such a force from an unprotected port close to the enemy's principal base—a port with no resources and into which only small vessels could enter—and he insisted that Durazzo should be used instead. The army accordingly began its march down the coast—it was shortly after evacuated to North Africa and Corfu—and we were left to clear out all the civilians we could before the enemy arrived.

The Admiral was the great potentate of the port and even the most difficult diplomats had to obey his will. He saw them one at a time in his room and then passed them on to Kerr and me. I remember having the Serbian Prime Minister, three Cabinet ministers, three foreign diplomats and two generals in my room at one time and not even having a cigarette to help to keep the peace. The Serbs were feeling acutely that their country had been betrayed by the procrastination of the Allies, and we on our side could respond with little but sympathy and grief. It is not a grateful gesture to offer to evacuate men who know they are leaving their wives, children and homes to the mercy of a hated and implacable enemy. This was the tragedy of a nation, and I see no reason to gloss the facts. King Peter had gone, but the Crown Prince, who was ill, refused to leave his army, though he had to be carried on a stretcher to Durazzo.

We were responsible for feeding the multitude, and the problem was immense. Except for a few Italian steamers there was an almost complete lack of shipping —and Austrian submarines lay outside the port; there were no harbour defences whatever. Stores, once landed, had to be transported by hand; there simply were no beasts of burden. The state we were in can be imagined from the fact that my servant Ottokar—recovered from his ducking—had evolved six different ways of cooking bully beef.

To make matters worse there were the daily bombings by enemy planes. As there was no real protection anywhere else, I used to climb the hillside and lie between two rocks. From there I had an excellent view of the planes and of the bombs as they dropped. In that confined space it seemed to me that every bomb would hit me right on the end of the nose. Following my recent experience in the *Brindisi* it was not at all good for my nerves. I suffered from a species of shell-shock or "explosion fear" for a long time after.

There were still 7000 to embark when the enemy were reported between Skutari and Alessio, within half a day's march of the port. The Admiral gave me instructions to see personally to the burning of the mails. There were hundreds of sacks of letters and parcels, addressed to British hospitals, Consuls and the Legation staff, in a tumbledown shed. Why they had been sent to Medua, and by whom, I could never discover. Helped by two men, I examined the contents of every sack. Postal orders and cheques I saved; I even secured a razor and shaving brush, which I badly needed, for

myself. It was, however, too long a job; we were but half through when the enemy were reported uncomfortably close. We burned the rest. I was even more reluctant than when I destroyed the rum at Belgrade. We went on board an Italian destroyer that night and were bombed as we left the harbour in the moonlight.

The British Squadron gave us a great reception at Taranto and the Admiral was accommodated in the *Queen*. I went to Malta to square up the affairs of the mission. It was a sad duty. Everything outstanding in the various cash and store accounts was written off as "lost" or "fallen into the hands of the enemy".

Personally I had lost three complete kits—one at Nish, one during the retreat and the last in the *Brindisi*, and I was nearly ruined by the loss of the private gear I had bought for others and on which I could not recoup. I was suffering from bad rheumatism, lumbago and dysentery, and I was terribly thin.

In February the mission was ordered home. When I reported at the Admiralty in a duffel suit they asked whether I was one of Scott's party from the South Pole. They did not like the look of me and I was sent on indefinite leave.

CHAPTER XVIII

QUEENSTOWN, EASTER 1916

Two or three times during the next six weeks I showed myself at the Admiralty and enquired about my next job. They gave one look at me and sent me away again. "Go away," they said, "and get fit and fat; then we will find work for you." I visited all my own people; I stayed with those of my fiancée in Scotland; I even spent a week with a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment at Pirbright Camp and watched a brother helping to knock them into shape. One evening I returned from a long walk in the country to find a telegram from the Admiralty ordering me to Queenstown without delay. The newspapers were full of the Easter Rebellion, which had just broken out, so I knew what the trouble was.

After a slow journey by Fishguard and Rosslare—no soldiers, only sailors, being allowed across—I reached Queenstown on 30th April. I found that my appointment was a temporary one "for Rebellion duties only". I was to be a species of additional Secretary to the naval Commander-in-Chief, Sir Lewis Bayly, and I was to confine my activities to the administration of a force of marines which had been sent to the Irish coast. There were about one thousand of these men and I was responsible for their disposition and feeding, and the

hundred-and-one small things connected with an expeditionary force of this nature. My Serbian experience had well equipped me for the work and I was quite happy with it. My only really insoluble problem arose when an Irishwoman failed to answer the challenge of a sentry and was shot; one could never live that down.

I was quartered, with two other officers, at a private house in the town. There was an armed guard at Admiralty House, where we worked, but no such privilege for us while we slept. The young men of Queenstown were in an ugly mood and would not make way for us on the pavement when we passed. We were in uniform and were officially ordered to go about unarmed. The gesture was a fine one for the authorities but not so comfortable for those who had to carry it out. I know I, for one, slept with an automatic under my pillow at night.

Our landlady, whom we all called "Katie", had been a foster-mother to naval officers for twenty-five years. She swore she loved us all, but she was an Irish patriot first and last. "Katie," I said one night, "if the rebels wanted to do us in—would you warn us?" "No," she replied, "I never would. I should be sorry, but, if the priests ordered it and the Irish did it, I would not raise a finger to save you." We carefully locked all doors at night after that.

By the end of the first week of May the rebellion was over, seven hundred men were reported in custody, and the leaders had been tried and shot. Mr. Asquith came

over personally to assist in the pacification of the country. He passed through Queenstown, and dined with the Admiral, on the way back.

Immediately things calmed down I became restless. An application to join the Royal Naval Air Service was refused, and I wrote privately to the Admiralty asking for any appointment in the Grand Fleet. Captain Campbell, of "Q" ship fame, called at the office and said he was urgently in need of a Paymaster for his "mystery" ship. In civilian rig he looked like a trawler skipper himself. I applied for the job but was told that only a Reserve man could be spared.

Shortly after midnight on Thursday, 1st June, I was sitting in the office when the Admiralty came through on the private wire. There had been a fleet action off the coast of Jutland. Our losses were *Queen Mary*, *Indefatigable*, *Invincible*, *Defence*, *Black Prince*. . . . "Good God!" I said, "how many more?" The long list was completed in a toneless voice from the other end. "And now for the German losses", I said, reaching for a fresh signal pad. The voice gave me two names —those of the *Pommern* and *Lutzow*—and added that some light cruisers and destroyers had also been sunk. "But that sounds like a big defeat", I said. "No; it's not that. But it's not a big victory. The Germans have withdrawn to their base."

I asked about the *Defence*. She was my last ship and I knew practically every soul of the fifty officers and nine hundred men on board. His information was not

complete, he said, but it was believed she had gone down with all hands.

The Fleet Paymaster across the way had his only brother in the *Defence*. When I went off duty at 4 A.M. I walked over sadly and broke the news. I had to throw gravel up at his window to get him out of bed. His niece appeared in a dressing-gown at the door. It was a harrowing scene. It seemed to me that I had lost all my pals.

For the next fortnight I took over routine work while the others got some leave. On 14th June a telegram arrived to say that I was appointed to the staff of Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Burney, Commanding the First Battle Squadron in the Grand Fleet. I was very glad.

Admiral Bayly sent for me, and, as I remember it, the following conversation took place.

"I see you are appointed to the Fleet."

"Yes, sir."

"Did you apply for the appointment?"

"No, sir; not for that particular appointment."

"Did you apply for *any* appointment, and, if so, did you apply through me?"

"I wrote privately to a friend in the Admiralty, sir, and asked to be sent to the Grand Fleet. I have been on shore service for eighteen months and I've seen no fighting at sea. Now I've missed Jutland."

"I consider it a grave breach of discipline that you wrote to the Admiralty other than through me. It is a disloyal thing to do and I won't have it. . . ."

He went on to give me a strongly worded lecture on

the evil thing that I had done. I stood strictly to attention, did not answer back, and saw a court-martial staring me in the face.

Then his features relaxed. He suddenly stepped across the room and clasped me by the hand.

"Quite right, my boy; that's where every officer under fifty ought to be. I wish to God I was there too."

Then I felt sorry to leave.

A.П.Ф.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GRAND FLEET

JOINING Admiral Burney's staff was a somewhat complicated matter as my letter of appointment had given no definite destination. I travelled to Kingstown, took steamer to Holyhead, and by Chester, Warrington and Perth reached Inverness on the evening of 16th June. There I stayed a night. Reporting to the Senior Naval Officer next morning, I was ordered to proceed to Thurso. There I was told that, the *Marlborough* having been severely damaged by a torpedo at Jutland, the Admiral had shifted his flag to *Royal Oak*. I went on board a drifter and took passage to the Fleet in Scapa Flow. There I reported on board the depot ship *Imperieuse* and, after some delay, was given passage in another drifter to the anchorage of the First Battle Squadron. I joined the *Royal Oak* late at night and, as there was no cabin accommodation available, I had to sling a hammock.

During my Serbian appointment I had, as already explained, been the proud possessor of two and a half stripes. On return to normal service I reverted to my former rank. This meant that I was under the necessity of removing one and a half stripes from all my uniform and returning to the gunroom mess. Some might have thought this an indignity, but I found it

rather fun. In any case a further change had shortly to be made, as I was promoted to Lieutenant's rank—a promotion which was subsequently antedated two years to 15th July 1914.

I found the *Royal Oak* to be a newly commissioned ship, fresh from the builders, and still with a name to make. Her 15". guns had hardly yet been fired at all. We spent our days and nights cruising about the Flow, doing gunnery and torpedo practice and exercising the crew in the routine evolutions of a fighting ship.

My own work was a combination of Secretary's Clerk and Intelligence Officer. We did our staff work by day and kept five watches in the Intelligence office by night. Five watches were better than three, and we had an occasional whole night off duty; nineteen hours' work a day occurred about twice a week.

For games we landed on the island of Flotta, where we chiefly played golf. The only snag was that junior officers dare not shout "fore" to an Admiral, and Admirals, as a class, are slow at golf. Our shore-going rig was monkey jacket and grey flannel trousers, and in such a congested space one seemed always to be giving or answering salutes. One day at the Golf Club I was accosted by a member of the Royal House. He asked me whether it was the ribbon of the White Eagle I was wearing, and I said it was. He asked whether I had permission to wear it, and I said I had. "I only wanted to warn you," he said, "because I was given that decoration by the Prince Regent of Serbia and I forgot to ask permission to wear the ribbon. When I

appeared with it at Court the King said I had not received the right to wear it and must take it off." I played soccer for the ship's company team and boxed during the dog watches; I also went away in the gun-room gig, but, after my experience of the *Argyll*, thought the midshipmen a lazy lot.

Late in June my old Captain, Michael Culme-Seymour, who had been recently promoted to Rear-Admiral, came on board and asked to see me on the quarterdeck. I was taking exercise at the time and hastily shifted into uniform, wondering what was up. He told me he was going to an Admiralty appointment at once but would later get a Cruiser Squadron at sea. Would I like to go as his Secretary? I replied that nothing would have pleased me more had I not, in common loyalty, been committed to Admiral Troubridge, should he require my services again; and that I thought there was a strong possibility of our return to the Balkans. He quite understood. But that decision altered my whole career.

On 17th June we put to sea and exercised a fleet action at low visibility, under similar conditions to those which had ruled at Jutland. By the irony of fate it was one of the clearest days ever known in the North Sea, visibility extending to 34,000 yards. We anchored at Invergordon and played tennis at Admiral Jellicoe's house, and golf at Tain and Nigg. On 28th July I was married by Dr. John Kelman, at St. George's, Edinburgh, to Elizabeth Craigie Gordon, youngest daughter of Sheriff Principal J. Campbell Lorimer, K.C. A few

days' honeymoon were snatched at Aviemore, where we saw the loveliness of Loch-an-Eilein and the grandeur of Loch Morlich and the Sluggan Pass, and then I was recalled by telegram to my ship. At Invergordon we spent two hours hunting for rooms, without success, and finally it was only by the kindly sympathy of a doctor's wife that I got my bride accommodated at Allness. When I arrived on board the *Marlborough* late at night, I found we were to sail for Scapa Flow next day. I had to take the Navigator's bicycle ashore in the beef-boat early in the morning to warn my wife that she was not being deserted within a week of her marriage.

The change-over to the *Marlborough* from the *Royal Oak* meant getting to know a new set of messmates. She was, however, a fine ship, very efficient, and in full fighting trim. Her gunnery officer told me he was in the control room, in the bowels of the ship below the water-line, when she was torpedoed at Jutland. All the lights went out and the ship heeled over several degrees; it seemed certain she was going down. For some minutes he could hear only the breathing of the officers and seamen round him, but not a man moved. Then the lights came on again, the instruments resumed their ticking, and the routine of passing range and deflection to the guns went quietly on. *Marlborough* remained in action till the fight was over; then, surrounded by zig-zagging destroyers, she proceeded slowly to the Tyne.

It was on Friday, 18th August, we received advance information that the German Fleet was coming out. We put to sea—a great Armada—that afternoon, and

steamed south at 19 knots. Early next morning the Battle Cruiser Fleet, from the Firth of Forth, joined us and went on ahead. Enemy submarines and Zeppelins were sighted and we knew the German Admiral must be aware that we were out.

When we left Scapa, Admiral Burney was in command and our duties in the Intelligence office of the flagship were enormously increased. During the day, however, Admiral Jellicoe joined the fleet in a destroyer and went on board *Iron Duke*. He must have felt that his opportunity to make a better Jutland was at hand.

In spite of our destroyer and light-cruiser screen ahead, enemy submarines attacked the Battle Fleet continuously throughout the day. In a not-too-rough sea the approach of a torpedo can be discerned by a line of bubbles rising to the surface in its wake. Having extra good long sight I was sent to the foretop to watch for these. My duty was to report the bearing and direction of an approaching torpedo to the bridge, when course would be altered as necessary to avoid it. I do not claim that my watchfulness made us immune; there were others on the job. A constant stream of reports came in of close escapes.

On Saturday morning the light cruiser *Nottingham* was hit by two torpedoes and sank. Losses were uncertain but some survivors were picked up. A little later the light cruiser *Falmouth* was hit by two torpedoes, whilst a third missed. She was taken in tow but, when off Flamborough Head, was hit again. The crew were taken off but she was still afloat and, when we last heard of her, was being towed at night (she later sank). More

Zeppelins appeared and "submarine nerves" began to seize the Fleet. The Commodore of Destroyer Flotillas had seven enemy ships in sight all day to the south-east. At 3 P.M. the Commander-in-Chief made the signal "Action with High Sea Fleet imminent"—but they then turned back. We chased on for two hours and then turned sixteen points for home. The Germans had refused battle again and we had failed to cut them off. Whether they came out originally prepared to fight, and thought better of it when they got their Zepp. reports, or whether they were bait for a vast submarine trap, we never heard. It seemed to me they could do it as often as they liked.

Immediately on return to Scapa the whole Fleet coaled and lay prepared to put to sea again.

Two days later the Fleet boxing championships were held on Flotta Island. A vast wooden arena, capable of seating sixteen thousand men, was built by the carpenters of the ships. In the middle of an exciting round one whole section of the stand collapsed and became a heap of waving arms and legs. When the débris was cleared there were found to be no casualties—except one man who had been asleep underneath; he had two ribs broken. In his speech at the prize-giving, Admiral Jellicoe said he had never realised quite so clearly how the sameness of the life on board was getting on the nerves of the sailors. "A man must come ashore and crawl under sixteen thousand cheering men to get a quiet sleep."

About this time I received a letter from Kerr, who

was commanding a battery of naval guns in Flanders, suggesting I go as Paymaster to his camp. I had letters from Serbian officers, asking me to return; and we heard that Roumania had come in. Admiral Troubridge wrote that things were warming up. I became restless again.

The First Battle Squadron regatta took place at the end of the month. I pulled in the officers' gig in the morning, had massage and half a glass of champagne for lunch, and pulled in the officers' cutter in the afternoon. This last was a wonderful race. There were nine boats in, the *Iron Duke* being coxed by Admiral Jellicoe and the *Marlborough* by Rear-Admiral Grant. The *Iron Duke* was leading till one hundred yards from the end when we came up alongside and pulled stroke for stroke; we beat them on the post. I shall never forget the vision of the Commander-in-Chief urging on his crew, waving the tiller over his head, and swearing like a trooper. The excitement throughout the Fleet was intense.

On 4th September, coming on board from golf, I found a telegram from the Admiralty appointing me Secretary to Vice-Admiral Troubridge and ordering me to repair to London at once.

I said good-bye to the gunroom, was dined by the wardroom, had drinks with the Secretary and the Chief of Staff. Finally, just before midnight, Admiral Burney sent for me and I had to explain that I had had enough. He said he was glad to hear I was rejoining his old friend and I was to have breakfast in his cabin before

I left. I had sent my servant to bed and had not packed my gear. I threw everything into open cases, anyhow, lay down at 2, and left the ship at 5 A.M.

Two days later I reached London and found my wife awaiting me at the Junior Army and Navy Club.

A.П.Ф.

CHAPTER XX

SALONIKA, 1916–1918

Our appointment was to the personal staff of the Crown Prince Regent of Serbia. The request for our return had originated from him. Once we had left London we had few relations with the Admiralty, our reports being sent direct to individual members of the British War Cabinet; our principal channel of communication was Lord Milner.

Our duties were somewhat vague and were at the time highly confidential, but I see no reason for reticence now. The normal liaison between two countries is effected by the appointment of an Ambassador or Minister; we had such an official in the person of Sir Charles des Graz, who was British Minister to the Serbian Government and resided permanently at the headquarters of the Government, Corfu. We were the liaison between the Crown Prince Regent, who was also Commander-in-Chief of the Serbian Army, and the War Cabinet—a much more personal mission. In other words, whilst the Minister reported the views of a Government, we reported the personal views of the head of the Army and the State. The Admiral naturally took most of the onus for this himself. His staff had dealings with others than Royalty. Alfred Stead, a son of W. T. Stead, kept in constant touch with the

headquarters staff of the Army and with any member of the Government who might appear in Salonika; I built up a close liaison with Serbian Army officers in general, but in particular with the "Navy" staff, motor transport, hospitals, and one or two of the front-line divisions. In this way the three of us covered a wide field, and our reports could not fail to be representative of the feeling and true state of the Serbian Army. It must be remembered that the country of Serbia was, at this time, wholly occupied by the enemy; the Ministers at Corfu were a Government without a state; the Army was all that remained. It was of primary importance that the Army should remain on the side of the Allies and that the Serbian Government should not make a separate peace. If the Army, by mishandling or neglect, should become completely dispirited and war weary, it might *demand* that the Government make a separate peace. It was part of our mission to discover evidence of mishandling and neglect and report it direct to the highest British tribunal, so that immediate steps might be taken to put things right. I cannot, of course, for obvious reasons, give an account of all our activities in this direction, but I propose to refer to some of them; by reading between the lines the rest may be easily imagined.

In words of remarkable power and prescience King Peter, aged and infirm, had blazed a trail which all might follow if they had but sufficient faith. "I believe in the liberty of Serbia", he had said, on arrival at Salonika, "as I believe in God. It was the dream of my youth. It was for that I fought throughout manhood. It has become the faith of the twilight of my life. I live

only to see Serbia free. I pray that God may let me live until the day of redemption of my people. On that day I am ready to die, if the Lord wills. I have struggled a great deal in my life, and am tired, bruised and broken from it; but I will see—I shall see—this triumph. I shall not die before the victory of my country." [1]

1916

The three of us, accompanied by the Admiral's coxswain and steward, left England on 14th September 1916, and travelled by Boulogne, Paris and Modane to Rome. I was transport officer and made a bad start, as we missed our connection at Boulogne and temporarily lost our heavy baggage at Modane. At Rome we got a line on the Serbo-Italian situation from our Embassy; the two races do not love each other. We also dined at Caesar's Palace and motored along the Appian Way by moonlight. The Minister to the Vatican offered to obtain for me an audience with the Pope and, like a fool, I refused because I was a Protestant; I realised too late that His Holiness sees thousands of Protestants every year. I tried to make amends by kissing St. Peter's toe. At the Church of St. Clemente an Irish novice left the procession and grasped me by the arm. "Are you going to the Salonika Army?" he said. "I have a brother there. . . ." He had a strange, wistful face, and I felt a good soldier had missed his vocation.

At Naples I visited the Museum and Aquarium and

[1] King Peter of Serbia died at Belgrade on 16th August, 1921.

in the evening we all dined with Admiral Presbyterro at Admiralty House. There we met the Marchesa (his wife), the Contessa Grifeo di Parthanna, and Admiral and Signora de Pons; we talked high politics till late. Next morning we sailed in the troopship *Orione* and our host of the previous evening provided us with a destroyer as escort to Matapan. There the British sloop, which should have taken over, failed to find us in a storm and we proceeded unguarded to Salonika. We were met by our old friend Captain Petronijevitch, "Uncle Milosh", whom I had last seen in Rome just after the retreat. Kerr and I had met him in the street and offered him dinner. "No," he said, "I shall pay for the dinner and you will stand the wine." Then he had taken us to the most exclusive restaurant in Rome. The food cost him about two pounds; our bill for the wine was twelve. He was a great *blagueur* was Uncle Milosh. His mission at the moment was to inform us that the Crown Prince was away, and to see that we were comfortably installed. We paid our respects to General Sarrail, the Allied Commander-in-Chief, and to General Milne, in command of the British Army, and we gathered a great deal of information from their staffs. On his return from the front the three of us dined with the Crown Prince. He gave the Admiral and me a very warm welcome back. I had to take opium to attend that meal, as I was thus early suffering from a return of the stomach trouble which bothered me at the end of the retreat.

The situation on the Salonika front, as explained to

us, was unsatisfactory. The Bulgarians had strongly reinforced their troops on the Florina front and had pushed back the Serbs. General Sarrail had no real reserves and claimed that 200,000 more men were needed if anything big was to be done. *Nothing* could be done without reinforcements. It was true that some advance had been made during the recent forward push, but the real object of the campaign had been to bring relief to Roumania—and that, broadly speaking, had failed. The Serbs thought that Mischitch might have succeeded where Sarrail had failed.

We rented four rooms on the top floor of a private house, overlooking the harbour, and moved in. I unpacked the typewriter and reconstituted the "office" in my bedroom, much as it had been at Belgrade. At least, by doing all our writing and typing myself I could be sure there would be no leakage—which was important, as our information came from five different Army staffs.

We made an immediate arrangement for sixty Serbs to be trained in British ships. We never allowed ourselves to forget that an advance to the Danube was our ultimate objective and, when that was achieved, we should need all the sailors we could get. There was a Serbian "sailor" camp quite near our house, but they could get no practical experience there. The Admiral decreed that they must go to ships outside the Dardanelles, and left all arrangements to me. I got them there, but I think our naval people were somewhat shocked at the novelty of the idea. Endless

questions arose regarding duties, pay, victualling and clothes. The result of several weeks' training was excellent in every respect.

Even the Crown Prince became "sailor minded" and visited the depot ship, *St. George*, and the submarine E. 14. General Sarrail landed French marines in Athens to overawe King Constantine.

Venizelos landed in Salonika on 9th October and the "Committee of Public Safety" was set up with headquarters at the Hotel Splendide. The triumvirate —M. Venizelos, Admiral Condouriotes and General Danglis—took up their quarters there. The reaction on the Serbian situation was certain to be important and I thought it a good thing to get in touch. Before the end of the year I was playing bridge regularly with General Danglis, the lesser Greek Ministers, and two sons of Venizelos. The stakes were high and the bridge exceedingly good. It has never been my fortune to find an Englishman who played bridge anything like as well as most of those Greeks.

I took lessons in Serbian and French and joined the International Club.

Towards the end of October, a Serb attack on Mount Sokol was repelled and we were informed that, owing to the awful weather and lack of troops, the attack on Monastir must be given up. We were, therefore, most pleasantly surprised when the Serbs renewed their attack on 15th November, captured 800 Bavarians and

2000 Bulgars, and two days after entered Monastir. Later in the month they took the strong hill "1050", east of the town, and we had dreams of an early advance on Prilep and Uskub. The Admiral and I prepared detailed proposals for the reconstitution of the Naval Mission and sent them home post-haste. Then, in company with Prince George (Prince Alexander's elder brother, who had renounced his rights to the throne), we proceeded up-country and made our advanced base in Monastir.

December 1st. Left Vodena 9 A.M. and passed our gear in lorry at the head of the Gornichevo Pass. Arrived Monastir 2 P.M. Admiral, Stead and I found rooms at the empty Constitutional Hotel. Admiral and I went for a walk round in afternoon. About 4 P.M. enemy fired several 6″ shell into the town. They mostly fell round the station, quite near us, and made the devil of a noise. Shelling continued at intervals. The enemy positions in full view.

December 2nd. Stead left for Salonika about 10 A.M. to see Colonel Peshitch, and was accompanied by Major Solomon, who is returning home, the Army liaison mission having been reduced.

The Admiral and I called on the French General de Blois in forenoon.

In the afternoon the enemy fired several 6″ shell and shrapnel into the town. High explosive all round us and shrapnel bullets in our garden.

In the evening we dined at French Artillery Mess; they doubtful about a further advance.

December 3rd. Heavy shelling round railway station in evening. R.A.M.C. Major arrived.

December 4th. Serbs advanced a little to east of Monastir plain.

Enemy fired thirty 4·7″ shell into the town during the afternoon—along the line of the river—and demolished several houses; many casualties among civilians. We receive communiqués from French each day.

December 5th. Heavy artillery fire from Serbian positions across the Monastir valley; in preparation for attack on 8th. During the morning I went round the back streets to find out yesterday's damage. Found several houses demolished; also one unexploded 6″ shell. In the afternoon Serbian liaison officer and I climbed to observation post to show him the positions.

December 6th. A day I shall long remember. Stephanovitch and I had ridden out towards Kenali in the afternoon and watched a fierce artillery duel on the Serbian side of the Monastir valley. When we were coming back the enemy shelled the road into the town with 6″ high explosive. The first fell about two hundred yards ahead, so we made a détour. On rejoining the road, which is in full view of their observation posts, a 6″ fell and burst within 20 yards. The explosion was appalling and we were enveloped in smoke and debris. I lost my cap and thought I had been cut in two as a half brick hit me in the back. Then my horse bolted and I lost my stirrups. I "thundered" into the town hanging on to the saddle —cheered wildly by a small group of onlookers sheltering under a bridge. Neither of us damaged, but a certain amount of bruising.

December 7th. Very heavy rain and very cold. I find it difficult to shave with a cut-throat razor—with cold water and high explosive outside. Each one sounds as though it were coming right through the wall.

We got the news of the fall of Bucharest—creating a

very painful impression. The Roumanian collapse has been extraordinary.

The Admiral and I lunched with the French General and his staff.

And so it went on, day after day till the 12th when:

Enemy shelled the town heavily—especially about 9 A.M.—when several houses were knocked down very close to us and shrapnel burst directly overhead. The Admiral decided to move back to Vrbeni.

The Admiral was no quitter but there seemed little object in our staying to be shot at.

There were one or two lighter incidents connected with this visit to Monastir.

At Vodena, on the way up, we stayed the night. When I got out of our car, stiff and rather surly, I found a Serbian lorry and driver at the door of an inn. The driver was in British A.S.C. uniform and I asked him whether the inn was clean.

"Clean enough for you I should think," he replied.

"Come down out of that," I said, "and don't ever dare to talk to an officer like that again."

He clambered slowly out of the lorry.

"Now," I said, "is this inn clean?"

"You asked me that before," he replied. "I said it's clean enough for you."

Then he grinned and I saw a small set of perfect teeth.

"You're a woman," I said, with conviction.

"How did you know?" she asked.

"I knew by your teeth," I said, "and because you

were damned impertinent. If you are going to wear that uniform, you must behave like a soldier."

(Fired by the example of Flora Sandes, who joined as a private and became a sergeant, we had quite a large number of applications from British women to join the Serbian Army. The Admiral often left to me the unpleasant task of turning them down. In general, for obvious reasons, their sex and lack of physical strength rendered them unsuitable for service in the Infantry, but a sprinkling found jobs as transport drivers. I remember particularly one Canadian woman who applied. She was annoyed when I asked who would carry her pack on the march, and furiously angry when I suggested she would be better employed looking after the two young children she had left at home. After Flora Sandes was seriously wounded by the explosion of a hand grenade, I am convinced we could have raised a regiment of women had we been so minded. Their martial spirit was wonderful.)

Near Vrbeni I visited a small camp of newly captured Germans. I was after information. A nice-looking Captain came up to me and said, "Are you returning to Salonika soon?" I replied that I was. "I would be grateful if you would tell my brother I am a prisoner and unwounded," he said; "he is skipper of the destroyer ——." When I arrived at Salonika I reported the conversation to the Senior Naval Officer. "He's one of my best officers," he said. We discovered later that it was a case of mixed parentage. One son went into the German army; the other into the British Navy.

In Monastir there appeared a Swiss professor employed on propaganda by the Serbs. His immediate job was to collect evidence of Bulgo-German atrocities in the town. He spent an afternoon looking round; they bombarded us in the evening, and he bolted from Monastir that night. But a book on the subject appeared in due course, well documented and supported by photographs. I even heard that he received the Serbian gold medal for bravery. My own enquiries from the local population elicited the fact that they preferred the Germans, then the Bulgars; and the French colonial troops last of all. Their daughters dare not leave the house with the latter in the town.

At Vrbeni we were just inside the Serbian frontier and, for sentimental and political reasons, we were anxious to keep at least an advanced base there, if possible. The difficulty was accommodation. Most of the villages had been entirely destroyed and, though Vrbeni had fared somewhat better in this respect, there was only one respectable house in the place. This had been occupied by Field-Marshal Mischitch, who had lately moved across to the eastern side of the Monastir plain. As soon as Prince George heard of our discomfort he insisted we should have the Marshal's house, and came over personally to see us installed.

It was a picturesque spot, like a walled farm-house, with bullet-marks round the door. It was even provided with a secret tunnel, the exit from which I could never trace. The late occupant had been a Serbian priest. One night the Comitadjis had called and asked whether he

was Serb or Bulgar. He thought they were Serbian Comitadjis, so he replied "Serb". He was unlucky in his guess and they shot him on the spot. His widow told me the whole story with many tears. There was also a charming daughter, about sixteen, and a small chubby boy. A guard of six Serbian soldiers completed our household.

December 19th. The two liaison officers and I arrived Dobroveni last night and dined with Mrs. Harley's Unit. Slept there. Left at 9.30 this morning and rode up Chuke Heights—the scene of the recent fierce fighting between the Serbs and Bavarians. Passed to the eastward of Polog and Chegel and to the westward of Iven, and about 1 P.M. reached the famous hill "1212". Left our horses and climbed to H.Q. of Danube Division. Col. Matitch took us to his observation posts and we had a splendid panorama of the enemy's, and our own, dispositions—at Monastir, Kaimachalan, and along the whole front. Heavy rain on return. Reached camp 5 P.M.

December 20th. Left camp 10 A.M. and rode to Chuke again and on towards Veli Celo. Spent the whole day on the positions there, examining trenches and defence systems. Found a large number of unburied Germans and Bulgars, turning black and smelling abominably, and a tremendous lot of discarded war material. In fact, the place looked what it is—a battlefield which has seen fierce fighting and has not yet been cleaned up. We collected a large number of relics which we took back to camp. While at lunch a German aeroplane unsuccessfully attacked a French sausage balloon quite close to us.

Back in camp 5 P.M. We dine and breakfast with the ladies, who cook our food for us.

December 21st. Stephanovitch and I repeated yesterday's expedition—but this time on foot. A strenuous day. No fighting here at the moment as the Serbian Army is being reorganised and getting a shorter line.

December 22nd. Left Dobroveni 10 A.M. and rode up the left loop of the Crna river to Ribarci—passing through Brod (in ruins from shell fire) and Negotin. Very interesting as all this valley is strongly entrenched and was held by the Bulgars for a long time. We got some good notes of their trench systems.

Lunched on a hill outside Ribarci and watched two German planes attack a French sausage—again unsuccessfully. Views wonderful.

December 23rd. Left Dobroveni 10 A.M. and rode to Voshtaran for stores. I returned to Vrbeni for gear. Tea with Hon. Mrs. Massey at Sakulevo. Overtaken by darkness on return and roads bad. Got stuck several times and lucky to arrive for supper. The mud was pretty awful.

December 24th. Collecting eatables and drinkables for tomorrow from the Scottish Women's Hospital at Sorovitch. A long cold drive. Much interested in the great viaduct at Exiscu which has been blown up.

December 25th. A glorious sunny day. At 10 A.M. we all went to the local Greek Church and attended a special English service in the Serbian language by a Serb priest. I then cut Yule logs till lunch. In the afternoon we collected ten horses and took six of the women for a ride to Petalino. Enemy aeroplanes bombed Dobroveni during our absence and five casualties resulted. It seemed a low thing to do on Christmas Day.

A big open-air dinner and fancy-dress dance at night —Yule logs burning and whole carcases on the spit. Much Serbian singing and music—and a little

love-making. A splendid day. Unable to sleep after it owing to acute cold. . . .

It was all very interesting and colourful, and so very different from ordinary naval routine. I thought of the fellows I had left in Scapa Flow and I knew how they envied me; their letters reeked of envy.

The situation at the end of 1916 was that we held Monastir but could get no further. The position on the Doiran and Struma fronts was at a standstill. The Venizelists had declared war on Bulgaria and Germany and had received a loan of ten million drachmae from the Allies in return—a pleasant gesture on both sides, as Venizelos had, as yet, no troops. The collapse of Roumania was proceeding.

1917

On my return to Salonika from the Serbian Front I took in hand the formation of our own *ménage* at the house. Up to the present we had slept there but taken all our meals out—a comfortless and tiresome proceeding. After a hunt round the restaurants I engaged a suitable cook—Katerina, a Greek—a most capable person who looked after us splendidly for the next two years and produced marvellously cooked meals at the shortest notice. I would take three or four guests back without notice and Katerina would rage and tear her hair, and swear there was no food in the house; but a marvellous confection of sardines or bully beef,

followed by fritters and savoury, would arrive within half an hour.

We were given a ration allowance by the Serbs, which enabled me to save most of my naval pay. We had the run of the English and French canteens and, when there was a famine ashore, we could obtain food and wine from the ships. Our mess was a great success.

When the Admiral was away I entertained my friends. I made a *mélange* of British, Serbian, French and Italian officers, prominent Greeks, Consular officials, and nurses when they could get leave, and we had some wonderful nights. For one of the best I hired a Serbian conjuror and secreted a small gypsy orchestra on the stairs. Two of my men sang and played the guitar. At midnight I gave the orchestra leader half a one-hundred dinar note and they played on till 2 A.M. to get the other half.

So successful were our early efforts that we greatly dared and asked Royalty to be our guest. The Crown Prince Regent Alexander, the Court Marshal and one of the staff came to dinner with us on 11th February and stayed till 10 P.M. We sat out on the balcony overlooking the harbour after dinner and I think the Prince enjoyed the novelty and informality of it all. He begged, somewhat wistfully, that we would ask him again.

The Admiralty had kindly sent us two Studebaker cars and we found it much easier to get about. We procured 12-bore guns and cartridges, and had frequent expeditions after wild-fowl. The exercise kept the Admiral fit, and he loved shooting at any time. Most frequently we went to the Vardar Marshes by road and

then the bag was moderate. Occasionally, with a Serb or a naval surgeon, I went to the Vardar by boat and usually had wonderful sport. I remember one day going out with fifteen cartridges and bringing back twelve duck; cartridges were rationed because they were difficult to obtain and cost half a franc apiece. The Admiral reduced my allowance if I was not shooting well. On another occasion the Serb did not bring a compass and we lost our way, and went round and round Salonika harbour in the mist; after five hours of that we returned, cold and weary, without having fired a shot.

Occasionally there was a spice of danger in these trips. The Vardar Marshes were vast and boggy, and it was well for two men to keep in touch. One evening I was shooting flighting duck when two large wild boar came to inspect me. One had huge tusks and looked as big as a donkey in the gloom. As I retreated he, followed by his wife, approached; if I stopped, he stopped also, and gazed at me with wicked twinkling eyes. I was up to my knees in water and could not run; if he knocked me over, I should surely drown. I was badly scared. Then I heard my companion's gun and retreated in his direction, shouting for him to come. I dropped all my duck and the wild boar let me go. After that I never went into the marsh without at least two cartridges filled with shot and candle grease; the ordinary cartridge would make a wild boar laugh.

On another occasion, my companion had dropped a mallard with the last shot of the day. He waded out to get it and was bogged. He struggled violently, but slowly

began to sink. I crept towards him in the treacherous quagmire and finally got hold of the end of the barrel of his gun, which he held towards me at arms' length. After a terrific fight I got him out. Then we noticed that his gun was fully cocked. It was a fact that an officer on horseback had ridden into the marsh and entirely disappeared.

During the winter parts of the marshes swarmed with duck and geese; I have never seen such flocks of the latter before or since. When they rose from their feeding-grounds they literally darkened the sky and made a deafening noise. I have known them settle on a field of winter wheat and eat it brown. In addition to these we shot widgeon, teal and snipe; one day I got a Lesser Bustard; and later we got pheasants, partridges and quail. On one sad occasion I fired at a bird right overhead. Both barrels went off and I was knocked flat on my back in a foot of water in the marsh. It was a cold and bitter day.

Our presents of wild-fowl were received with huge joy. The Consul-General wrote to say he "had not eaten roast wild-duck since he was a Vice-Consul". By the foreign diplomats they were highly prized. But woe to me if I came back with an empty bag. The Admiral and Stead were both good shots.

Early in January we were distressed to hear of an attempt upon the life of the Crown Prince. Fortunately it was a failure. The whole affair was kept very secret, but we knew the Crna Rooka (Black Hand) Society were involved. The name of a mysterious "Apis" was

heard in private talk. The ultimate object was to form a Republic and withdraw Serbia from the War. Several officers were deported and some were shot.

Meanwhile the Allies had sent an ultimatum to King Constantine of Greece. It was demanded that his army and war material should be sent to the Peloponnesus and that he should apologise for the attack on French marines on 1st December. The terms were accepted on 11th January, and in return the Allies promised to confine the Venizelist revolution to New Greece.

Turkish troops were reported on the Serbian Front for the first time. Marshal Mischitch was decorated with the G.C.M.G., to the great joy of all Serbs.

Salonika was bombed by twelve German planes. Eight British soldiers were killed and three hundred wounded at Summerhill Camp. An eyewitness told me a large number took refuge in a drain and a bomb fell right on top of them. Enemy planes also exploded a big Serbian ammunition dump at Vertekop.

Mr. Bonar Law made a statement in the British House of Commons which left us in some doubt as to the amount of support we could expect from the Home Government for the Salonika Front. The report we received read as follows:

> "The Government is unable to express any opinion on the subject of the Salonika Army. That is to say, we cannot state whether it is maintained for offence or defence—a matter which the Germans would certainly like to know—nor can we state whether the Near Eastern Campaign is considered

by us a vital military operation. The House ought to reflect that Great Britain is a member of an Alliance and that the political action which we must take cannot be exclusively determined by the British Government.

"And since it is suggested that the campaign in the Near East has been a mistake, I declare categorically that we could not have acted otherwise. We had to act in co-operation with our Allies, and this front imposes on us obligations which we have to fulfil. If we withdrew our troops from the Macedonian front, Greece would be invaded. All the Balkan peninsula would fall into the hands of our enemies, and all who had sympathised with the Allies would be at their mercy. . . . The Allies who are interested in Greek and Balkan questions have not always been in agreement on the measures to be taken, but I am anxious to say that the great step was carried out with their unanimous assent. Our great anxiety today [early in March] is to avoid attack on our Eastern expeditionary force from behind by the Greeks in case of an attack being directed against it by Germany."

One could read a great deal between the lines of that statement.

I made arrangements for the Admiral to inspect the Serbian naval camp. There were now 180 officers and men whose efficiency had been improved by training in our ships. They were hard at work building boats

without proper materials or tools. Their improvisation and ingenuity were remarkable. We helped them all we could.

We co-operated in a grand survey of the Vardar River estuary.

We worked hard to effect some improvement in the Serbian food supplies. They were not allowed to purchase from British canteens and were wholly provisioned by the French. We were finally successful, later on, in effecting a welcome change in this respect.

We were invited out a great deal and made hosts of friends. At a dinner with Admiral Thursby on board the *Lord Nelson* we heard all about the Allied Conference at Rome. General Sarrail gave us luncheon, and discussed affairs on the Balkan Front. I met the Russian Princess Narishkine. We saw a good deal of Lord Granville, British Minister to Venizelos; and Essad Pasha, the great Albanian, called.

One day the Admiral sent me out to leave some cards. On my way back, dressed in my smartest uniform, a French motor car passed at great speed and the wheel came off. First the wheel knocked me over, and then the car. I struggled home in a sadly dilapidated condition. The Admiral asked whether I had been fighting, but I explained what had happened. "Nothing like that ever happens to me", he said; "you have all the luck." He was getting rather bored!

During the spring I commenced a great labour. The Admiral directed me to compile a Salonika "Who's Who". By close liaison with the various Headquarters'

staffs I managed to insert the name of every officer in the British, French, Italian, Serb and Russian forces; I even wrote in a large number of the Greeks and most of the Diplomatic Corps; I tabulated the strength and disposition of all the Allied troops on the Balkan Front. And when I had finished it, the record was out of date. Officers had been killed, or wounded, or changed their jobs; troops had taken over other sectors of the front. It was the most useless piece of hard work I ever did. Even the Serbs let me down by reorganising their forces from three armies into two.

In March a great local stir was caused by the death of Mrs. Harley, Lord French's sister, at Monastir. She had been doing relief work there for some time and refused to leave, in spite of the frequent shelling of the town and consequent anxiety for her safety. Sitting at her window one evening she was hit by a shell splinter and instantly killed. I felt personally grieved, as I knew her well and was fond of her; she had been my hostess at Christmas-time.

There was an enormous muster of Allied officers at the funeral at Salonika, each country being strongly represented. The funeral oration was delivered by Lubomir Yovanovitch, Serbian Minister of the Interior. His peroration was very moving: "Not sparing herself, she worked untiringly till the very last moment of her earthly life, and now she has begun her eternal life—so that we can truly join the ancient poets in saying, 'Non omnis mortua est'—she is not altogether dead. Noble daughter of a great nation, though not a sister of ours by birth, still dear to us as a true sister, your

tender soul is followed and will be followed by our fervent prayers and the everlasting gratitude of the Serbian nation. Thank you, and Glory be to you."

On Easter Sunday, which, by the Greek calendar, fell a week after ours, the Admiral and I called on King Peter and the Crown Prince. We also exchanged an immense number of visits with the various Army chiefs. The form of words used on these occasions is simple and picturesque. The visitor says, "Christ is risen". The visited replies, "Christ is risen indeed".

Not so simple was the reply to a question I was asked at the French Artillery mess a few days later. The Colonel turned to me after lunch and asked, "What will the English do with the Kaiser when they get him"? "They will not so far honour him as to send him to St. Helena", I replied. The liaison officer told me afterwords that I had a narrow escape. If I had rapped out, "Send him to St. Helena", as they thought I would, they would never have forgiven me.

To fortify myself more strongly in these matters I took intensive lessons in both Serbian and French. I had disgraced myself at a dinner party by replying to my hostess's polite enquiry as to whether I liked the food, "Oui, j'aime beaucoup la poule en camisole".

To keep myself fit I played hockey, when at the base, two or three times a week. I played regularly for the British Army Headquarters' team and often for the Ghurkas at the Indian Hospital, where a good friend of mine was in command. Twice during the season I played for the Army against the Navy, and, when the Navy objected, I changed over to the other side.

А.П.Ф.

HALF-TIME: ARMY *V.* NAVY; SALONIKA, 1917
(Admiral and Secretary)

MY SERBIAN FAMILY: VRBENI, 1917

Sailors in soldiers' uniforms, working with the Serbs—no one knew quite what we were.

On 26th April the British attacked on the Doiran Front and were repelled with heavy losses. It was a night attack; the men went astray and were caught by heavy barrage fire.

Three weeks later the British, French, Italians and Serbs all attacked, and only the Serbs had any success. They were very distressed at the failure of their Allies to make any impression on the enemy. The average Serb thought of his future country as stretching from Trieste to Sofia, and from Neusatz to Salonika, and after five years of war they had lost everything but a few square miles. To them the position was lamentable. A Government crisis took place at Corfu.

A round table conference was held between the Crown Prince, Field-Marshal Mischitch and Admiral Troubridge. It was decided to send the Admiral to England to voice the needs of the Serbian Front. He and Stead left in the destroyer *Arnot* on 23rd May. I remained alone.

Things were quiet when the others had left. I went out and about a lot but I missed English company at home. In addition, I had already been laid up with severe bouts of stomach trouble and I felt I needed a change. The opportunity was provided when a friend of mine, an Army chaplain, came to tell me he had lost his faith. He was in a rather dreadful state. He said he was living in an atmosphere of sickness, death and

burial, and he had come to doubt that there was any God. He came to me because he knew I was an honest doubter and he was anxious to know how I had achieved my peace. So I took him up-country with me and, night after night, we argued and discussed these things on level terms. Here is an extract from my diary for one day:

May 31st. We left Vrbeni about 10 A.M. for Monastir. I was uncertain whether I would go into the town or not—so stopped the car about 500 yards short of the bridge to see what would happen. It was fortunate, as a shell burst just where we would have been one minute later. Other shells followed on the road ahead so we decided not to risk the car but to walk in by the fields. This we did, and got in without incident though very hot and dusty. I first looked up our old quarters. Found the hotel with the roof blown off and our messroom destroyed; the men's quarters had entirely disappeared.

We lunched with the Serbian Relief Fund. While walking round the town after lunch the enemy fired several more shells over. Left about 3 P.M. but could not move the car as enemy shelling the road beyond it; very surprised they could reach so far. Struck a lucky moment at 4 P.M. and got across the dangerous belt. Padre delighted to have been under fire.

After a week of that he returned to his job with a certain sane enthusiasm which I greatly admired.

On another occasion I took the British Consul up.

June 16th. Heavy rain. We walked to Vakufkoy in forenoon. Later took the motor to Florina. It was my first

visit to this Greek town—second only to Monastir in Macedonia. Climbed the hill behind and viewed the town. It was market day, which made an extremely picturesque effect. Florina is beautifully situated between two ranges of hills and has so far escaped bombardment. Back to Vrbeni in afternoon.

June 17th. To Dobroveni in the motor, and Shipley and I climbed Chuke Heights. I had hoped to show him the positions there but, unfortunately, about half-way up he had a bad heart attack and, after resting for an hour, decided he was unfit to proceed. I had a difficult job to get him down to the car. We went to Brod and called on the Serbian Relief people there. Also met the McPhails (the lady doctor was with us in Belgrade) and went over their little civilian hospital. Called at the hospital at Sakulevo on the way home. My stomach very bad and I'm using a lot of chlorodyne.

On one of these trips an unpleasant incident occurred. I had an English Major in the back of the car and there was an empty seat beside my Serbian driver in front. To the north of Vodena we came up with a French regiment on the march. They always straggle over about five miles of road, and in the very rear I noticed a young Lieutenant limping along with bad feet. I stopped the car and offered him a lift, which he joyfully accepted. We were just beginning to gather speed again when a Captain jumped on to the running board of the car (an open tourer).

"What do you want?" I asked. "There is no more room."

"You have a Lieutenant in the car," he replied. "I am a Captain and I demand a place."

"Oh, do you?" said I. "I am a Major and I say there is no place."

As he continued to argue I leaned forward and hit him hard on the chin; he somersaulted backwards into the ditch.

"Oh, what have you done!" cried the Lieutenant. "He is the terror of the regiment and will demand that you fight a duel."

"We are not allowed to fight duels," said I, "but here is my card. Give it to the Captain and tell him I shall be happy to meet him with my fists at any time."

I heard nothing further from the Captain, but some days later I asked the Lieutenant to lunch.

"Well?" I asked.

"The Captain," he said, "is a changed man. You see, many of the regiment saw you knock him into the ditch and he cannot get over the disgrace."

I had too many French friends in high quarters to fear damage to the Entente Cordiale—such as it was.

In the middle of June General Sarrail sent a Franco-British column to Elassona in Thessaly and took over control of the Corinth Canal; he was determined to have first call on the Greek harvest for Allied needs. King Constantine abdicated in favour of his second son, Alexander, and Venizelos went to Athens to form a Government. The Greek position was at last cleared up from the Allied point of view.

Meanwhile I had discovered that the Serbs had in their possession two British 4·7″ guns but no ammuni-

tion for them. After protracted negotiation I secured, through Admiral Thursby, 1000 rounds of ammunition and the assurance that another 1000 rounds should be held in reserve. When the ammunition arrived at the end of June we found that the guns were practically worn out. So then I started further protracted negotiations to secure the replacement of the guns. It was like a woman furnishing a house, with a parsimonious husband in control of the purse-strings.

In view of the more frequent aeroplane attacks I caused a large and comfortable dug-out to be constructed in our back garden and secured gas-masks for our small staff. A British Colonel insisted on demonstrating the latter and succeeded in making me violently sick.

As the summer advanced the heat became intense, with temperatures for weeks on end well over 100° F. in the shade and reaching a maximum of 108·8°. We were pestered by sand-flies and mosquitoes and found it difficult to sleep. For exercise I dropped hockey and took up cricket for G.H.Q. Bathing picnics with doctors and nurses took place two or three times a week.

Prince George had a sharp attack of malaria and was ordered off to Switzerland to recuperate. He called one evening to say good-bye and found me in my shirt-sleeves. He said he liked our English cocktails very much.

In mid-July I had another bad stomach attack. I spent three lonely days in bed and then a friendly doctor called. He sent me to hospital and there amoebic

dysentery was diagnosed. They said I must have had previous attacks as my bowels were badly scarred; I had narrowly escaped being an invalid for life. Then they pumped emetine into me and kept me on starvation diet. It was six weeks before I escaped. I started in a Canadian hospital and finished in an Australian; during the change-over the attention was none too good. The colonials did not believe in pampering their patients. One of the young nurses in this hospital was, literally, the finest living model of womanhood I have ever seen. On a hot still night of August, just before sailing for England, she suggested a last bathe under the cliffs about a mile away. Our exit from the compound was a stealthy business, and so unpremeditated that we had no time to seek out our bathing costumes. We swam in the calm, warm waters of the Aegean, clad only as the ancient Greeks were clad, and afterwards we lay on the sand to dry and talked of many things. Then we resumed our uniforms and crept back through the line of sentries to our respective quarters. . . . And that was all.

Whilst there the great fire of Salonika occurred. The hospital overlooked the town and we saw the first outbreak in the old Turkish quarter in the afternoon. A high wind was raging at the time and the flames literally swept across the city towards the quay. As it became dark the conflagration looked terrific, with dense smoke and flames shooting to the sky. There were a whole series of explosions as the troops blew up houses in the path of the fire.

I broke out of hospital and went to investigate. I

found the whole of the old town and the new business quarter were gutted; the outlying residential district, including our house, was safe. A fortunate change of wind had averted a worse disaster and had driven the fire back upon itself. There were 120,000 homeless as it was.

I found looting being ruthlessly suppressed. Tucking my hospital brassard into my pocket, I got through the cordon and ran into the arms of a British Brigadier. He asked what I was doing and made me his temporary A.D.C. To fight the fire in the back streets there were a few ancient contraptions misnamed fire-engines—one was marked with the name of a British Insurance Company and the date 1710—whilst the water supply was non-existent or lacking in pressure. A few Army fire appliances were working hard along the quay, where water was, of course, plentiful, but all the hotels, cafés, cinemas and other familiar places were already gutted and the most they could do was to prevent a new outbreak.

The Jewish quarter was an extraordinary sight. Clad in ancient biblical costumes, the inhabitants thronged the narrow streets—ever driven back by the approaching fire, shrieking, sobbing, imploring help from any and every Allied uniform they saw. In the 2000 years of its history Salonika had probably witnessed no more heart-breaking sight. From every tenement and hovel staggered many-coloured men and women bearing all sorts of useless household goods. It was a second Exodus for them. And yet my subsequent impression was not one of wild panic but of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

Our British Tommies were wonderful, especially with the very young and very old. The French lorries appeared to be full of pretty girls, and some ugly stories got about. The Greeks will long remember the good work of our men on that awful night.

Roughly a square mile of the city and four thousand houses were burned out. I think the biggest blaze of all was made by the Hotel Splendide, the headquarters of the Greeks. The heart of the third city of south-eastern Europe had been gutted. Once a free city, but occupied and looted in turn by the Romans, Berber pirates, the Normans, and finally the Turks, the great trading link between the Adriatic and the Aegean had seen many vicissitudes—but scarcely one to equal this. And yet it was not all loss; the conflagration destroyed one of the worst slums in the Levant.

Subsequently I met Mawson, the architect, who showed me his plans for the new city. If they were ever carried out in their entirety it must be a wonderful place.

Whether the fire was accident or design was never satisfactorily established. On the day before it started—in several places at once—Monastir was heavily bombarded by incendiary shell and one thousand houses were destroyed.

Early in September the Admiral returned. I persuaded the doctors to let me out and motored across to Santa Quaranta, on the Adriatic, to meet him and Stead. It was a wonderful trip through mountainous country on splendidly constructed Italian roads. We stayed one

night each way at Koritza, a republic which existed under the politically minded French for a bare six months. It was amusing to see how the French and Italians spiked each other's guns.

On our arrival at Vrbeni the Crown Prince called and a long conference was held regarding the results which the Mission home had achieved. He was specially pleased with a warm personal letter from King George. After the meeting we sent off long and exhaustive letters to Lord Milner and General Smuts.

I raced with these to Salonika and there received a bad piece of personal news. My beloved mother had died whilst I was in hospital and the family had kept it from me for a while. She brought thirteen children into the world, and reared eleven, and had truly earned some great reward.

With the return of the others it was possible for me to go on leave. I travelled by rail to Itea, took ship to Taranto, and overland by Rome, Paris and Le Havre. I had a pleasant journey with a Brigadier-General whose acquaintance I made early on by letting him out of a lavatory in which he had been inadvertently imprisoned. The door had snibbed to behind him and the catch would not work, but one of those useful contraptions in naval knives soon did the trick. He stood me a champagne lunch at the "Trocadero" in return for that small service. We made good speed as I was a King's Messenger or the General's A.D.C., as the occasion demanded, and the Military Transport officers found the combination irresistible.

I spent a second honeymoon at the village of Elie on the Firth of Forth.

The return journey was not so fast. I bought Camembert cheeses in Paris as a present for the Admiral. They were high by the time I reached Milan. When I opened my suitcase the smell was terrific. I saw two wounded Italian soldiers on the platform and handed them one each. I said we were proud to be associated with such great heroes in the War and that I would like to offer my humble tribute. They said the English were the finest race on earth and that they dearly loved Camembert cheeses. Mine, they said, were just right.

I still had nothing for the Admiral, so at Rome I bought some Tauchnitz editions of books. One was a novel by Anthony Hope and I failed to notice that it was in two volumes; I bought Volume I. I shall always remember the Admiral's remarks when, about a month later, he rushed into my room—keyed up with excitement—and asked for Volume II. In any case we both accepted the principle that he strafed me once a month; it was against the custom of the Service that a Lieutenant should live alone with an Admiral. I might forget my position.

I appeared likely to be held up indefinitely at Itea as the railway to Salonika was cut by floods. I wired for the motor car and was refused. Finally I went through the Corinth Canal to Athens and thence to Salonika by sea. I was given a great welcome back by my Serbian friends. At a river "Slava" I made my first speech in Serbian and was carried in triumph round the camp. I was formally initiated into blood-brotherhood.

The military position at the end of the year was not too good. The front was fairly quiet but there was a general feeling of suspense and gloom. The Italian disasters had made a tremendous difference to the morale of the Central Powers. Italy seemed likely to cease to count; Russia and Roumania were already out. American reinforcements were arriving all too slowly and we had had fearful losses on the Western Front.

The Serbs reported the arrival of seven new Bulgarian regiments and an Austrian division in Macedonia. We felt that an attack was imminent. One ray of hope was the decision to bring the 8 French and 4 British divisions up to full strength, providing another 27,000 men; and the arrival of the Greek 4th Division in reserve. We also began to feel the benefit of the arrival of Serbian troops from the Russian Front; a division had served there under our old friend General Jivkovitch and were being transported round from Archangel.

I attended Church and Holy Communion on Christmas Day.

1918

The year opened in a somewhat drab and colourless fashion and without promise of the great things to come. If anyone in Salonika had prophesied that the Allies would be victorious on all fronts before the end of the year I think he would have been dubbed a madman or a fool. At the best we could only hope to beat off the threatened attack; at the worst we would be

driven back into the "Camp Retranché" or the sea. As regards the Western Front it seemed to us the War would go on for years.

As the Admiral was up-country I received and paid his New Year calls. For the most part these were formal affairs, but one at the Serbian Transport mess merits special comment. Colonel Deroc was in command there and he asked me to be the guest of the mess on 13th January, which is the Serbian New Year. I took the British Consul, Shipley, with me. After a wonderful dinner, with much dancing and music, Shipley made a speech in French and I in Serbian—to their huge joy. We then joined with them in dancing the Cola—the Serbian national dance—which I had been at some pains to learn. We saw the New Year in round a big camp-fire and there was more singing and dancing till 3 A.M. One could not stand too many nights like that—and there were other calls to be paid. In the excitement I accepted a challenge to shoot against the whole mess next day. It ended in a tie between myself and one of the Serbs—which, under the circumstances, was the best possible result.

Then, taking two Majors from British Army Headquarters with me, I fled to the front.

January 17th. Leaving Vrbeni by car we reached Voshtaran at 9.30 A.M. where the liaison officer met us. Marshal Mischitch received us and we had a most interesting half hour with him. Then the four of us went on to Yellak, where we lunched with the ladies of a Scottish Women's Ambulance. From there we went

to the Prince Regent's observation post and had a splendid view of the Serbian army positions, the air being very clear. Back to the Scottish Women's Ambulance for tea and to Vrbeni for dinner, very tired. One of the Serbian Relief officials dined with us.

January 18th. Arrived Tepavci 10.30 A.M.; weather perfect. Received by the Italian G.O.C., General Mombelli, and lunched with him and his staff. After lunch, with the liaison officer, we left in two cars for the Trident, the Italian observation post overlooking hill "1050". Had a perfect view of the Italian positions at close range and an artillery and trench mortar duel took place during our stay. Then back to the Italian mess.

January 19th. Arrived in Monastir about 10 A.M. Owing to thick ground mist we got in unseen and were not fired at by the enemy. I took the others round the town, showed them the enemy gun positions and our own, inspected recent damage, and we also went to the house in which Mrs. Harley was killed by a shell-splinter after we left last year. We found our old hotel absolutely destroyed. We went over the Serbian Relief underground hospital and found almost every bed occupied by ancient men and women—some of them nearly one hundred years of age. I pointed out to the matron that the beds would be more useful for fighting men or the younger generation, but the implied suggestion that she should throw the old ones "to the lions" was not well received. After calling on the town major and some other officials, we left for Salonika. They found the trip very interesting, and so did I.

On the following day, a Sunday, the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, with four Turkish destroyers, issued from the Dardanelles and engaged our forces. They effected a

complete surprise and two British monitors, the *Raglan* and M.28, were sunk at anchor in the harbour of Mudros. Turning southward the *Breslau* ran into a minefield and was blown up and sunk. The *Goeben* also struck a mine, and was severely damaged, but managed to limp inside the straits, where her Captain ran her ashore to avoid sinking. The *Lord Nelson* was in Salonika harbour when the news came through and promptly put to sea in a fog. To think that our men had waited since September 1914 for this—and it did not make a very creditable story when it happened.

Our private lives at Salonika continued much the same. We went to the headquarters of the 26th Division at Vergetor and had lunch with General Gay; and there we saw a most excellent performance of *Robinson Crusoe*, in which it was hard to believe the lovely chorus was composed of men. We also saw excellent shows by the Roosters and other divisional concert parties. When work permitted, which was fairly often, I continued to slaughter geese and duck; to play hockey by day and bridge by night. Our usual stake at the latter was ten shillings a hundred, and over the course of a year I was one hundred and forty pounds on the right side. And yet people will tell you that card wins and losses always even up! I have kept a bridge account for twenty years and never been on the wrong side yet. At poker and baccarat I was unfortunate, so gave them up. One night at the Crown Prince's palace I had two royal straight flushes and not a soul came in. The second time I showed them and charged £1 a head. The stakes were

high and it still hurts me to think to what heights the betting *might* have gone.

On my way home from the Club one night my batman, who was walking a few yards behind me, was sandbagged and robbed and I never heard a sound. On another occasion, just after midnight, I was playing bridge with three Greeks at the International Club when we heard a burst of rifle- and revolver-fire outside. They looked at me questioningly, but I sat quite still; it seemed safer so. We broke up the party about 3 A.M. and on the way home I met a French sergeant of Gendarmes. "What was the trouble outside the Club a couple of hours ago?" I asked. "Oh," he replied, "that was nothing much. Some apaches knifed and robbed a Russian officer and we chased them along the water front, but didn't catch any of them." I did not mind the risk of knifing but I did not like the thought of the lashed razors which the Sicilian bravoes threw with such deadly aim. At night I always carried a tiny Browning automatic concealed in the palm of my hand.

During the winter I saw a good deal of the Jews. The Salonika Jew is an aristocrat of his race—a direct descendant of the blue-blooded Jews whom Ferdinand and Isabella drove from Spain. I have met the Roumanian Jew, and read of the Polish Jew; for the Salonika Jew I have nothing but respect. I played cards at their houses and occasionally danced; on one occasion I attended a wedding, and must admit I was somewhat shocked at the primitive proof displayed of the fact that consummation had been achieved.

I made friends with the Scottish Presbyterian

parson who had been sent out to deal with these people by the Society for the Conversion of the Jews. He told me he had been twenty-five years in Salonika and so far had truly converted none. But he said he liked them very much and, so far as I could gather, his liking was returned. His somewhat expensive evangelical ministrations were treated with amused contempt; his sociological services to the poor were gratefully received.

We sent home to the War Cabinet an exhaustive report on the existing food prices in Serbia, and the amount it cost a family to live, as related to the Serbian officers' scale of pay. We proved that the latter could not possibly remit enough, through Switzerland, to keep their womenfolk chaste and their young families from starving. We begged for an increase of pay. Just before the Armistice the scheme went through!

In March, as the result of our efforts, a Commission was established for the "Reconstitution of Serbia". The idea was to give every Serb, on his return, what he had before he left his country. We felt the promise would make them happier (as it did) and help to keep them in the War. The cry for "peace at any price" was getting stronger, and became unbearably loud after the Germans' successful break-through on the Western Front.

In April I had a piece of bad luck. I had ridden with a wet saddle for two days and an abscess developed. I was taken to hospital for operation in the middle of one of my bad stomach attacks. The abscess became a fistula and amoebic dysentery was again diagnosed.

That meant transfer to an isolation hospital and confinement within barbed wire. The doctors were betting six to four I would be invalided, and the Admiral refused to let me go. The position became difficult. The Prince Regent sent me his "Order of St. Sava", to be worn round the neck. There were four of us in the isolation ward. One died; one went mad; one was invalided home; and I got out. I had a spell at an Officers' Convalescent Home and then my dear Serbs took me to their bosoms and watched me back to health.

I took things easier after that. The doctors stopped my hockey so I took up tennis instead. Bathing picnics with the nurses were a great solace. I spent more time quietly at home.

On 3rd June the Crown Prince Regent called on the Admiral in person and stayed an hour. He was delightfully friendly but not in good spirits owing to the continued success of the German attacks in France. I particularly mention the visit as it was the last time I saw him. He had a shy, reserved nature, but very liberal views for the future government of his country. Fate was later to make him a Dictator and to reserve him for the assassin's bullet at Marseilles. We were most sincerely devoted to his cause.

The Greeks had their first success, near the Vardar River, and General Danglis, their Commander-in-Chief, called and gave us his views. He expressed his intention, when the mobilisation was complete, of concentrating all the Greek forces and retaking Kavalla

and Dedeagatch. In our ignorance of what the autumn had in store we thought it an idle dream.

General Guillaumat left secretly for France and General Franchet d'Esperey arrived to take command.

Meanwhile a British General issued an order that officers were not to give nurses lifts in their cars. A copy was sent to me, which I showed to the Admiral. He was furious with the Army and said the Navy would never obey. Such discourtesy was entirely foreign to his nature where the ladies were concerned. "Fitch," he said, "I give you an order to pick up two nurses and drive them round and round in front of the Commander-in-Chief's house."

Two days later I was returning from the Ordnance Store, out on the Monastir road. It was a hot day and dusty and I was half asleep. Suddenly my Serbian driver, who had been well trained, drew up and said there were two specially pretty nurses who looked as though they would like a lift. I put them in the back of the car. We were just picking up speed again when a car approached along the middle of the road with the Union Jack on the bonnet. Then I knew there would be trouble. I was ordered out into the road and given a severe telling-off. At the first pause I said, quite politely but firmly, that I was taking two nurses into Salonika and would be much obliged if the General would let me pass. Then he went off again, and I replied that he was still blocking the road. Then he demanded of his staff officer who I was, and, when informed, drove off in a great rage.

I gave the nurses tea in Salonika and then reported the whole story to the Admiral. He patted me on the back and was very pleased. That would teach the damned soldiers to consult the Navy before they issued such childish orders.

The sequel came next morning when I was told the Admiral wished to see me in my Sam Browne and sword. He told me I was a damned young fool. When he gave me orders like that he did not expect them to be obeyed. It was people like me who made bad blood between the Navy and the Military Commander-in-Chief.

And I knew that, if there was trouble, I had been officially reprimanded.

Then he put his arm round my neck and talked of other things.

There was not any trouble. The military order was withdrawn.

We spent most of July at Vrbeni keeping up our various contacts along the French and Serbian Front.

My greatest friend, my much-loved young brother, died as the result of German gas in France.

I was playing bridge at a British M.T. camp one night when we were called out by a low urgent cry from the tent next door. The doctor had been lying half asleep on his mattress when a tarantula dropped from the roof and ran beneath his blankets. He dare not move his legs in case he was stung, or bitten, or whatever tarantulas do. At the word "go" two whisked off his blankets and two shot him out of bed by the arms

and legs. He was in a highly nervous condition but untouched. He had been wondering why dead locusts were dropping from the roof. We caught the tarantula—like a great hideous hairy spider; and it lived in a wire cage for several weeks.

But of all the objectionable insects at Salonika I think the mosquito was the worst.

It stood on its head
And waggled its legs
And injected my blood
With its millions of eggs;
Heigh-ho! its billions of eggs.

The sandfly was merely a trial.

At the beginning of August I was the guest of the Staff of the Danube Division, First Serbian Army.

August 5th (*Bank Holiday at home!*). Left Vrbeni by car and arrived at Headquarters of Danube Division 11 A.M. Lunched there and pleased them greatly by maintaining the conversation in Serbian. Then on horseback to 3rd Mountain Battery and watched bombardment of enemy trenches. On to Homoliye, where is the first battalion of the 9th Regiment and went over second line trenches. Dined with the officers of the battalion. After dinner to staff of 9th Regiment and to their theatre, when I saw *Artileria Rusticana*—very good indeed. To bed after midnight very tired.

August 6th. Left Homoliye 5 A.M. after a cup of black coffee in the Mess. Reached 4th Howitzer Battery an hour later, after some rough riding; it is commanded by one of our old battery commanders of Belgrade days. Very pleased to meet each other again. Breakfast with him and stayed two hours. Rode on to 1st Field

Battery and inspected it; then back to Headquarters of Danube Division. Saw the G.O.C. and Chief of Staff separately and had a long talk with each. Lunch and a sleep; then on to Morava Division. Called on G.O.C. and then rode on to Starovina and dined with the C.O. of the 3rd Regiment.

Half an hour after midnight we went along the whole of the front-line trenches, and crawled out to four observation posts right up against the wire. I distinctly heard the Bulgars talking in low voices about 20 yards away. They sent up a few star shell and flares, which meant lying absolutely flat and still in the open. There were occasional little bursts of rifle fire but nothing serious. The Serbian sentries in the trenches were a very stolid crowd; took no notice of us unless we spoke to them. I expect they had been warned we were on the way round. The whole effect was eerie. I spent nearly three hours there—fascinated—and went to bed overtired.

August 7th. Coffee and preserves at 8 A.M. with Regimental Commander. Climbed on foot to No. 5 Battery and saw a little firing on registered targets. Then on to Headquarters of Chief of Divisional Artillery. Heard his views on shortage of heavy guns and ammunition and promised to report. Rode back to lunch with staff of Morava Division; and on to say good-bye to staff of Danube Division; a most kindly and hospitable crowd.

As a result of this trip I was able to report: "It is patent to me that the whole Serbian Army, from the highest to the lowest, is itching for an offensive, and believe they can get as far as Uskub." They did!

Three nights later I received an urgent message from the Danube Division to go back to them. An officer

came over in an old Ford car to fetch me. It rained in torrents, and, most unfortunately, the lights failed when we were negotiating dangerous mountain roads. We tossed up who should lie along the front wing and connect the wires by hand, and he lost. It was an awful job and I don't know how the driver kept on the narrow track. There were several hairpin bends and we had one wheel over the edge on two occasions; the drop was several thousand feet. I was the most scared as I had nothing to do except think about it. We arrived at 2 A.M.

The occasion for calling me up was to watch a heavy bombardment of the enemy back lines and communications. There were three firings, the third at 11 P.M. being very picturesque and interesting. A night bombardment on a large scale is a wonderful sight. We watched it from the mouth of a tunnel on the face of a hill directly overlooking the enemy. This looked like serious preparation for a general attack.

On return to Vrbeni I found an entirely different job awaiting me. Sir Charles des Graz, British Minister to the Serbs, was travelling from Corfu to Salonika, and the Admiral sent me 120 miles to offer him our house. This was most gratefully accepted and I spent two or three busy days introducing him to the local notabilities and arranging dinner-parties at home. Katerina rose to great heights of culinary skill and I borrowed two sailors from the *St. George* to help wait. The Minister called on the Admiral on the way back to Corfu and gave me a good "chit" as a bear-leader.

Meanwhile, at the end of August, bad news came in from the Albanian Front. The Austrians retook Berat and Fieri from the Italians and also pressed back the French. I went back to the staffs of the First and Second Armies but found them in no way rattled by this attempt to turn the left flank. They pointed out that the line in Albania was thinly held by both sides and that small local advances had little strategic value.

The Admiral went to see the Prince Regent on a special mission. We felt the time had arrived to make some definite declaration of policy regarding the formation of a Yugoslav state. The Prince agreed, but was worried at the thought that the Croatians and Slovenes would numerically outnumber the Serbs. On the other hand, he quite saw the value of undermining the Croat and Slovene adherence to the Austrian state. He promised to let us have an early reply, for transmission to the Yugoslav Committee in London; but we feared it would be some time before anything was done. We wrote to Wickham Steed to that effect.

A doctor informed me that, at the end of the first week of September, there were 29,000 British officers and men in the local hospitals suffering chiefly from dysentery and malaria, with a certain amount of Spanish flu. Flu on top of malaria seems to have a fatal effect. I had seen with my own eyes that the whole Serbian Army was yellow with malaria. One wondered how troops in such a state of health could be expected to attack.

CHAPTER XXI

THE OFFENSIVE

(*As the News came in*)

September 15th (*Sunday*). The Serbian offensive started this forenoon. We got the first news about 11 A.M., reporting the capture of Sokol, Dobro Polye, and Vetrnik with eight hundred prisoners and two batteries of guns. The Bulgar first line has been broken and second line is being attacked.

The Admiral angry at not being informed so that we could have been on the spot. I think we are in a better position at Salonika—to act as circumstances dictate.

We sent off urgent request for reconstitution of the Naval Brigade.

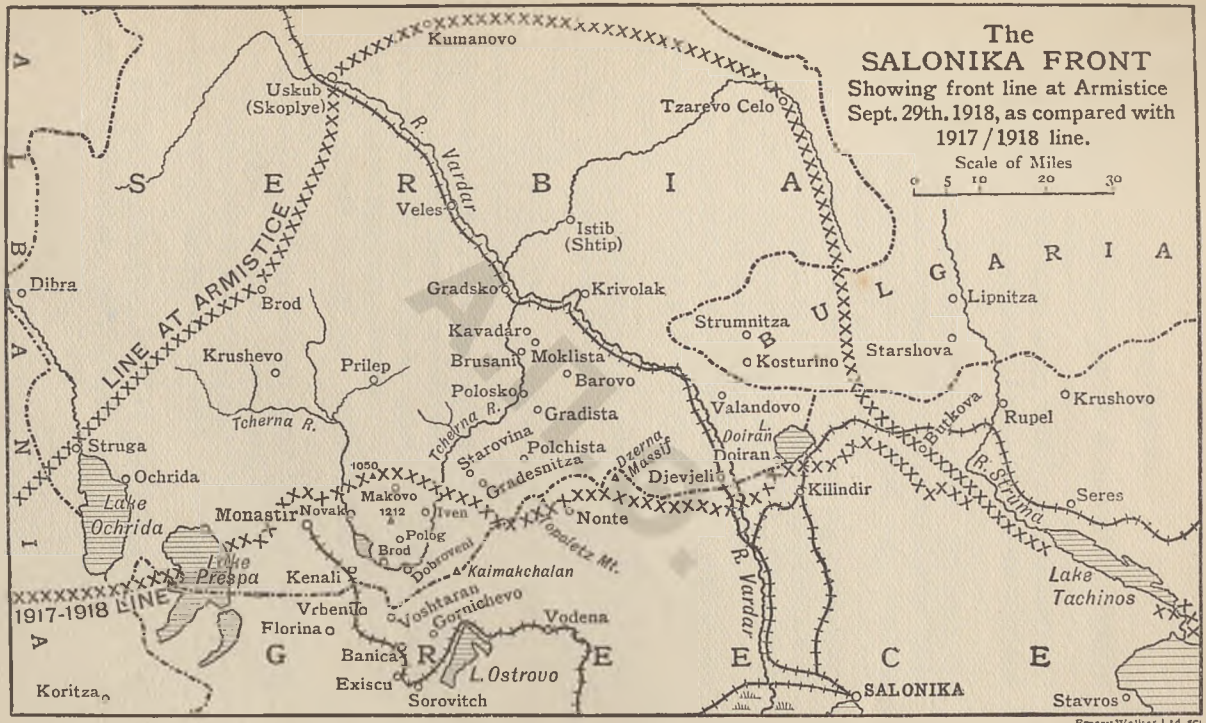
After dinner to Baron Charnaud's for bridge. General Danglis lost 100 drachmae, of which I won 50. I love to fleece the Greeks.

September 16th. Sokol, key to enemy first line, retaken by them last night but again captured by Serbs and French this morning.

Kozyak, the key to the second line, also taken. Also the villages of Gradisnitza and Starovina on the left and Zboisko on the right.

Prisoners now 3000—with 30 guns (16 heavy).

French attacked between Serb and Greek sectors. The Serbs are evidently the spearhead of the advance.


The
SALONIKA FRONT
Showing front line at Armistice
Sept. 29th. 1918, as compared with
1917 / 1918 line.
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30
SERBIA
BULGARIA
GREECE
ALBANIA
Kumanovo
Uskub (Skoplye)
Tzarevo Celo
R. Vardar
Veles
Istib (Shtip)
Dibra
Brod
Gradsko
Krivolak
Lipnitza
Strumnitza
Kavadaro
Starshova
Krushevo
Prilep
Brusani
Moklista
Kosturino
Barovo
Poloska
Gradista
Valandovo
Krushovo
Tcherna R.
Rupel
Struga
Starovina
Polchista
Doiran L.
Doiran
Ochrida
Gradesnitza
Djerna Massif
Djevjeli
Kilindir
Lake Ochrida
1050
Makovo
1212
Iven
Monastir
Novak
Nonte
Seres
Polog
Brod
Dobroveni
Kopaletz Mt.
Lake Prespa
Kenali
Kaimakchalan
Lake Tachinos
LINE AT ARMISTICE
1917-1918 LINE
Vrbenio
Voshtaran
Gornichevo
Vodena
Florina
Banica
L. Ostrovo
Exiscu
Sorovitch
Koritza
SALONIKA
Stavros
Emery Walker Ltd. sc.

Α.Π.Θ.

After dinner, bridge *en famille* at de Velle's—Belgian Minister to Serbia.

The Admiralty write to say they have recommended me for the newly organised Consular Service after the War.

September 17th. Prisoners between 4000 and 5000, including a Colonel commanding a regiment and his whole staff. Kychkov-Kamen, enemy third line, reached. Danube Division still going ahead.

At Serb Headquarters they tell me the preliminary bombardment lasted 24 hours—the last two hours with gas shells on the enemy artillery positions. As a result the advance found their artillery very quiet.

Later reported the massif of Topoletz captured; also Pandeli. The villages of Polchista and Bechista fired by the enemy.

Late at night very important point of Zovik captured by Serbs, French and Greeks. . . . Over 50 guns now in our hands.

Colonel Pirie, M.P. for Aberdeen and late O.C. troops at Corfu, dined with us.

September 18th. Serbs regrouping forces for a further advance. They have gone forward nearly twenty miles already. British and Greeks attacked on Doiran front but without apparent advance.

Had a vein in my nose cauterised to stop heavy bleeding.

September 19th. The Serbian spear-head has advanced so far (Nonte, Gradista, Veprecani, Dabica) that they must widen the base of the salient, the present position being highly dangerous in case of serious counter-attack.

British attack held up west of Lake Doiran but Greeks pushing round the eastern end.

We dined as the guests of the Italian Mess.

September 20th. Big Serbian advance to the line Polosko–Brusan–Moklista–Barovo–Bohila. They have, therefore, almost reached Kavadar which we believed was the final objective.

The taking of half the Dzerna Massif very important as giving more room at the base of the salient.

Dined with British G.H.Q. Mess. The attack at Doiran has failed.

September 21st. Whole Dzerna Massif captured by Franco-Greeks. Serb infantry in Kavadar, and cavalry advanced north of that place, cutting the railway line. The cavalry met ten Bulgar guns coming south and captured them.

British 22nd Division were badly cut up at Doiran.

September 22nd. Enemy burning his dumps behind present line and Serbs pushing hard. Cavalry sent to cut line between Veles and Prilep. Aeroplanes report enemy in great confusion either side of Serb salient.

British have advanced at last and taken Djevjeli.

Serb line Smolani–Drnovo–Krooshevitza–Gradsko–Ducavitza—in places nearly forty miles beyond the jumping-off points.

Admiral lunched with Prince Regent. Reported the latter to be well on top of the wave and even inclined to be a little arrogant. He complained at the slowness of the French and British advance in support of the Serbs. The Italians are picking up enemy war material walked over by the Serbs and issuing spectacular communiqués about their captures.

September 23rd. British, French, Serbs, Italians and Greeks all advancing. Serbian cavalry making enormous captures of ammunition, forage and food. Enemy losses in dead and prisoners very heavy.

Prilep occupied by the Serbs and Topolchani by the Italians.

I celebrated with a big dinner party at the British rest house, which went on till 4.30 A.M.

September 24th. Enemy evacuating positions north of Monastir. Cavalry nearing Veles and Shtip.

A Serbian officer fresh from the line tells me that the Bulgars are very loath to give themselves up to the Serbs or French coloured troops—fearing death in any case—and that they defend themselves to the end.

Serb line Snegovo–Prilep–Kozyak–Krootevitza–N. of Gradsko.

They are worried that the French do not attack from Snegovo and Oblakovo as they fear German reinforcements cutting in at the base of their advance. On the other hand the Bulgar armies are practically cut in half.

September 25th. British reached Valandovo, south of Strumnitza Pass. The Admiral and I went up country to Vrbeni. I turned in early with fever, gravely worried that I should go sick at such a time.

September 30th. Bulgaria capitulated unconditionally at noon.

The Allied line, when fighting ceased, was Struga–Brod–Uskub–Koomanovo–Tzarevo Celo–Kolarovo–Borshkova.

It was a wonderful finish to an attack which had started with limited objectives. The speed and fury of the Serb advance chiefly contributed to the spectacular success. After a position of stalemate for two years the enemy were utterly defeated in two weeks. The capitulation of Bulgaria was the first breach in the enemy line.

The Serbian Army marched slowly and relentlessly

to the Danube. They were not allowed to enter Bulgaria for fear of the reprisals which would result. They had too many old scores to settle.

The Admiral duly arrived in Belgrade and became Commander-in-Chief on the Danube. He had assumed his rightful place at last. Later he became Head of the Inter-Allied Danube Commission and moved his quarters to Budapest—to the rage and fury of the Serbs. They thought he had deserted them, though I have reason to know that his heart was with them to the end.

Terms of Armistice with Bulgaria

(*Signed on 29th September* 1918)

1. Immediate evacuation of the territories still occupied in Greece and Serbia in conformity with an arrangement to be concluded. No cattle, grain, or stores of any kind are to be removed from these territories. No destruction shall be caused by the Bulgarian troops on their departure. The Bulgarian Administration shall continue to carry on its functions in the parts of Bulgaria at present occupied by the Allies.
2. Immediate demobilisation of all the Bulgarian armies, with the exception that a group of all arms, comprising 3 divisions of 16 battalions each and 4 regiments of cavalry, shall be maintained on a war footing, of which 2 divisions shall be allocated to the defence of the Eastern frontier of Bulgaria and of the Dobrudja, and the 148th Division to the protection of the railways.
3. The arms, ammunition, and military transport be-

longing to the demobilised units shall be deposited at points to be indicated by the Supreme Command of the "Armées d'Orient". They will then be stored by the Bulgarian authorities, and under the control of the Allies. The horses will likewise be handed over to the Allies.

4. The material belonging to the 4th Greek Army Corps, which was taken from the Greek Army at the time of the occupation of Eastern Macedonia, shall be handed over to Greece, in so far as it has not been sent to Germany.

5. Those portions of the Bulgarian troops at the present time west of the Meridian of Uskub, and belonging to the 4th German Army, shall lay down their arms and shall be considered until further notice to be prisoners of war. The officers will retain their arms.

6. Bulgarian prisoners of war in the east shall be employed by the Allied Armies until the conclusion of peace, without reciprocity as regards Allied prisoners of war in Bulgarian hands. These latter shall be handed over without delay to the Allied authorities, and deported civilians shall be entirely free to return to their homes.

7. Germany and Austria-Hungary shall have a period of four weeks to withdraw their troops and military organisations. The Diplomatic and Consular representatives of the Central Powers, as well as their nationals, must leave Bulgarian territory within the same period. The orders for the cessation of hostilities will be given by the signatories of the present convention.

CHAPTER XXII

THE END OF IT ALL

And I? I was very sick.

That attack of fever at Vrbeni on 25th September got worse and worse. The Admiral was furious with me, and loud in scorn. Then a French doctor was found and diagnosed malaria—and the official atmosphere became a little warmer. I was sent to a Serbian field hospital at Banitza where they kept me alive with camphor injections. On the day Bulgaria capitulated I was but semi-conscious and heavily dosed with quinine.

The hospital moved forward and I was cast out, to find my way to Salonika. After waiting till 2 A.M. on a windswept siding I found shelter in a truck and proceeded in a goods train. My companion was a Colonel who had recently been trephined. We were a sad couple. On 4th October I stumbled into our house more dead than alive.

For two days I worked to move our base and provision the Admiral at the front. Then I borrowed a thermometer and found my temperature was 103½. A doctor found me and sent me to a British hospital.

There I was given quinine to the tune of ninety grains a day—intravenous, intra-muscular and by the mouth. I became deaf and blind. The Consul-General called and told them it was murder and he would hold

them responsible for my death. He had been twenty-five years in the East and never allowed more than 20 grains of quinine a day. The dose was reduced to 60 grains and then to 40, and I began to take more interest in life.

In the third week of October I was sent to the Officers' Convalescent Camp. I tried hard to get my discharge but the doctors would not let me go. The Admiral arrived to fetch me but the Colonel was quite firm: I could only leave the hospital when I received my route order to England. Another such attack of dysentery or malaria would be the end.

I had used up my vitality—during those years of mis-spent youth.

On Armistice Day I was invalided home.

EPILOGUE

In 1920 I went back to the Danube, but I knew well I should never have gone. I was invalided out of the Navy before I had been there a year.

Fifteen times I lay on the operating table during the next four years—four weary years of hospital life, rebuilding that which had been destroyed.

Then I got free at last—and in 1925 I started all over again.

I have no regrets—except for the Navy I loved so well.

H. M. F.

The spice of life is battle; the friendliest relations are still a kind of contest; and if we would not forego all that is valuable in our lot we must continually face some other person, eye to eye, and wrestle a fall whether in love or enmity.

R. L. S.

THE END

A.П.Ф.

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